ARIZONA ANTIQUE RADIO CLUB NEWS

Vol XX, No 1 2003

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Arizona Antique Radio Club
www.azarc.org

The Arizona Antique Radio Club was organized in 1983 for the preservation of the history and artifacts of radio and television, and for the advancement of knowledge and appreciation of radio technology and communication. The Club is a non-profit corporation organized primarily for the mutual assistance of radio devotees and collectors in Arizona. Membership, however, is open to any persons who have an interest in radio and television history, preservation, restoration, and collecting.

Meetings are held from October through May and consist of touring collections, presentations of technical, historical or restoration information, thematic displays of radios and the autobiographical experiences of the members. We hold antique radio Swap Meets two or three times per year. Members of the Board of Directors are elected at the Fall Swap Meet in November. Most meetings are held on Saturdays in the Phoenix and Tucson areas, and when possible, elsewhere within Arizona. Meeting schedules, information and maps can be found at www.azarc.org.

Membership dues are $18 (individual) or $20 (family) per year, due in January and provide access to all club benefits including the current issues of the *Radio Club News*. Send dues or membership inquiries to: John Martin, 2105 E. Stephens Rd., Gilbert, AZ 85296 (phone and email below).

The *Arizona Antique Radio Club News* is the publication of the Arizona Antique Radio Club, Inc. It is mailed First Class to current members.

Contributions: submission of articles, news items, fiction, photographs and other materials relating to radio history and collecting are greatly appreciated, particularly if they have an Arizona connection. All members are encouraged to broaden their interest in the hobby by sharing their experiences, opinions, knowledge and observations with the club through its publication. Send materials for publication to Bill Lettow, 2025 E. LaJolla Dr., Tempe, AZ 85282 (phone and email below). For membership info and changes of address contact John Martin, 2105 E. Stephens Rd., Gilbert, AZ 85296 (phone and email below).

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Radio Club News Contributors:
Martin Bergan
George H. Fathauer
Andy Ooms

Editor: Bill Lettow

2004 Board of Directors

President:	Steve Smith	480-831-3095	radio747@yahoo.com
Vice-President:	Pete Way	602-840-7184	bakeapple@earthlink.net
Secretary:	John Martin	480-892-2074	nightsight01@getnet.net
Treasurer:	Mike Brown	480-668-7541	mikebrown@antiqueradios.zzn.com
Editor:	Bill Lettow	480-730-6058	lettow@yahoo.com
Webmaster:	Jeff Shields	480-855-1282	jeffandkt@msn.com
Directors:	Dennis Craft	480-510-3054	dcraft@qwest.net
	Stephan Lew	520-881-0385	slew2969@aol.com
	Carl Roberts	480-998-0680	tswcarl@netscape.net

A.A.R.C. NEWS

FRANK VOGLER PASSES AWAY

We received news from Sheila Vogler that her husband passed away on May 24, 2004. Frank was a radio club member from Tucson. Longtime members will remember our September 1995 visit to Frank and Sheila's house as part of a full day's visit to members' collections in Tucson.

We'll remember Frank for his friendly presence at nearly all of our swap meets. While not a major or aggressive collector, Frank was the kind of guy who made swap meets worth going to, regardless of what was being offered for sale.

All of us in the club offer our condolences to Sheila, and we hope we'll still see her at our swap meets for many years to come.

HOW TIME FLIES

This issue of the *Radio Club News* comes to you in August 2004, but it is actually dated Number 1 of 2003. There will be no more 2003 issues. The very few articles written by members in 2003 were mainly used to make up late 2002 issues.

Later this summer there will be a 2004 issue, which will include the current membership list and reports on the events of the first half of 2004. It's not too late to contribute stories and articles for the late summer issue.

CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

The Board of Directors proposed, in the summer of 2003, to amend the bylaws of the club at the October 2003 business meeting. Ratified in October were the follow changes:

- The Business Meeting will be moved from May to October, at which time nominations to the Board will be accepted.
- Elections to the Board will take place by ballot at the Fall Swap Meet in November.
- The newly elected Board will meet before the end of the calendar year to elect officers from among its members.
- The Board can convene a meeting at any time if the conditions for any meeting are not met.

For exact wording of the changes, or a copy of the club bylaws, contact Dennis Craft.

ELECTIONS

We had Board Member elections in November 2003, at the swap meet, and Mike Brown, John Martin, Bill Lettow and Steve Smith were elected to new two-year terms.

In December 2003, the Board met and elected Steve Smith, President; Pete Way, Vice-President; John Martin, Secretary; Mike Brown, Treasurer; and Bill Lettow, Editor. Jeff Shields was appointed as webmaster.

California Historical Radio Society Acquires Radio Station Building

The latest CHRS journal had a major announcement - the club is taking over the former site of radio station KRE in Berkeley. This structure built in 1937 and now graffiti covered and used only as a transmit-

ter site, will become CHRS' new headquarters and a Bay Area radio museum. The club negotiated for a year with the station owners to take over the Bauhaus-insprired building, restore it to its 1950 appearance and provide ongoing maintenance and security in exchange for its use as club headquarters.

More information is available at www. californiahistoricalradio.com. Way to go CHRS! *Now aren't there some aging broadcast facilities on Central Avenue in Phoenix?*

COMMENT ON THE LACK OF JOURNAL ARTICLES

As you know I have been a passive supporter of the club for many years. My primary ties are in my inventory of tubes and the repair of TV-7 testers....

I noted in the most recent issue that it may be the last, at least until there is reason to publish something relevant and of interest to club members. This concerns me as I see it as point in history that marks a downturn.

I have seen a downturn in the number of booths at the swap meets and with the new above, can only conclude that radio collecting is in the decline at the moment.....However, there are those who can boost the hobby if the barriers to participation (perceived) are lowered...

Well, I am writing this email, much to my own reluctance (I'd rather remain passive), to offer at least one suggestion that may help the club publication.....It is simply this:

PROVIDE AGGRESSIVE ASSISTANCE IN ARTICLE PREPARATION

I may be speaking out of turn, as I have not actually sampled the submission trail for the club, but I figure (from afar) that:

- Technical guys don't like to write stuff
- Club culture doesn't promote articles
- Article submission (how to) is not widely known

So, what could be done is to:

- Make some changes to the Club culture to promote articles:
- Contest for best or most unique or entertaining or something...Perhaps a prize (membership dues...)
- Publish 'WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU' message about article writing and what is involved
- Publish a 'HOW TO' guide on article writing....Make available on website.
- Broadcast request for articles via Email - include help for article prep.

It would seem to me that a new coat of paint on this issue would help....I realize that everyone's time is taken with work and such and that any real support is problematical for support time..... So.....Can I help here.....

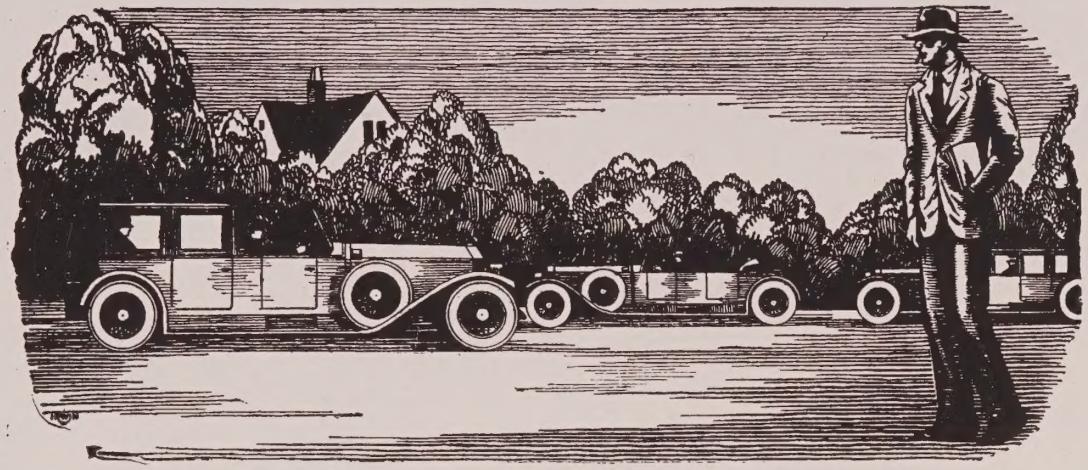
Not that I write a lot, or am good at this, or have a lot of time for it, but maybe you could use a bit of a boost in this area....

This is a reluctant offer as If figure if this takes off, I'll be swamped...or perhaps the obverse...

Anyway, let me know if the thoughts above spark anything or are of value. Feel free to forward to others. Maybe the group can be of help here....

Regards,

Daniel J. Nelson djn@ieee.org



I Thought Success Was For Others

Believe It Or Not, Just Twelve Months Ago I Was Next Thing To "Down-and-Out"

Many times in the old days, while I trudged home from work to save carfare, I used to gaze enviously at the shining cars gliding by me, the prosperous men and women within. Little did I think that inside of a year, I, too, should have my own car, a decent bank account, the good things of life that make it worth living.

One day I thumbed through a little book on my table and saw an advertisement I had seen many times and passed over without thinking, an advertisement telling of big but intangible rewards for writing articles related to the exciting field of Antique Radio.

I inquired further and learned that by sharing my experiences, expertise, wisdom, common sense, opinions and observations with club members I would become known as a real swell guy, who no longer had a "wish-bone" where my "back-bone" ought to be.

I had so many ideas in the Radio line that I quit my measly little clerical job and devoted full time to writing. This new live-wire field held an abundance of golden ideas for articles:

My first radio
Great and impossible finds I made
Tips for making finds
Tips for new collectors
Great finds that turned sour
Tips to avoid making finds that turn sour
Interviews or visits to club members
How I got started in radio
Experiences in radio's early days
Early Arizona radio: stations, manufacturers, stores, personalities
Interviews of radio pioneers
Job experiences relating to radio
Cabinet restoration tips
Chassis repair tips
Great and impossible restorations
Electronics for the beginning collector
Technical help in question and answer format
History of a set, a company or a station
Development of circuits, tubes or components
History of a design trend, i.e. art deco
Any aspect of radio in Arizona history
Unusual sets
Recent acquisitions
Before and after shots of a restoration
Collections or swap meets visited
Interesting radio related places visited
The state of the hobby
Letters to the editor
Comments about articles seen
Comments about the Radio Club News
Opinions about prices

You may not be as bad off as I was but think about it - are you satisfied? If not you should be writing something for your radio club. The Editor (address on page 2) was real helpful and will help you too.

Fifties Radio: From Golden Age to Rock n' Roll

by Andy Ooms

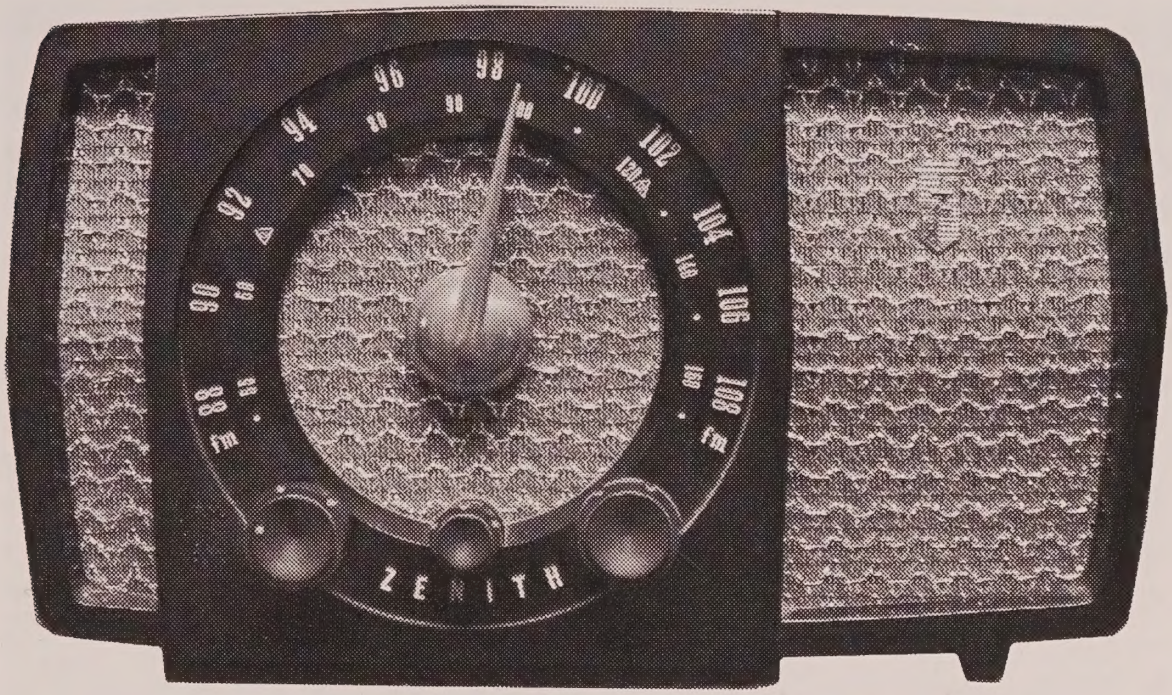
Here we go again with another memoir type article by this radio hobbyist, or obsessionist if you prefer. My spellchecker tells me that obsessionist has not previously been a word, but it works for me, and if you are reading this magazine, you know what I mean by it.

This will definitely be a niche piece, covering that which appears to be a small niche: AM radio as heard in Grand Rapids, Michigan from 1956 until 1958 and 1960 until 1962. Those happen to be my years at Calvin College as interrupted by U. S. Army service.

Who could possibly be interested in this subject? Well, not too many normal people I guess, but persons intrigued by the science and magic of radio might enjoy it. Although Grand Rapids is the subject of my comments, the changes I noted there were being duplicated by similar changes in every city and region of the country. So this is as much a report about the revolution of the radio broadcasting industry in the 50s as it is about the programming in a particular region.

I have a lot of interest in many, but not all, of the various parts of the radio hobby. My particular interests include historic and current broadcast programming on any band, antique radios, Dxing on medium (AM band) wave, and short wave listening. Most of you readers probably have a greater knowledge in many of these areas than I do. I am an expert in none of these areas, but I enjoy what I do know about them. My enjoyment is as much in thinking and reading about old radios, old radio programs, short wave and DX reports as it is in actually collecting tapes of old programs, or making lists of stations heard, or repairing antique electronic sets. My technical knowledge is shallow; my listening interest deep.

To describe what kind of listener I



50s and 60s radios from the collection of Bill Lettow

am, let me give you some examples. I enjoy long drives across the United States to visit relatives, to see tourist attractions, or to go camping and fishing. On these trips, I like listening to AM radio, picking up on the number of stations carrying national talk show hosts, listening to farm reports, discussions of local issues such as the history and utilization of the Missouri River, nostalgia music, classic country, and live sports broadcasts. When at home in Arizona or sitting around a campfire in the U. S. or Canada, I also enjoy listening to short wave: music in any language or anyone speaking English, with the exception of crackpots expounding their questionable economic, political, or religious theories. My short wave listening includes international broadcasters, hams, aviation and marine weather, military stations, aircraft communications, unidentified persons on boats, and clandestine voices repeating numerical or alphabetical spy codes.

This listening interest on my part has been around since 1943 when as a four year old I became interested in the music, voices, and laughter emanating from our family Zenith console in the town of Corsica, South Dakota.

Some of you have read my previous articles in *Arizona Antique Radio Club News, DX News*, or *Nostalgia Digest*. One was mostly about South Dakota radio listening in the 40s and 50s; the other was primarily about my high school radio business. Well, here's another one.

One more disclaimer before I take off on this third piece in the series: I am writing from what I think I remember. Some of you may remember some things differently. In most cases, if you remember something differently you are probably more accurate. I did not take notes over the years, and as a part-time retiree,

I am not too interested in extensive researching.

I moved from South Dakota to Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1956. Naturally this was a major change in my life. I moved from a town of 450, where everyone literally knew everyone else, to a city of 200,000. Instead of working in the family business in South Dakota, I had the freedom and the necessity of getting employment from any source I could find because the family business no longer existed. And of most immediate importance, instead of taking it easy academically in a rural high school, I had to fight ferociously for passing grades in a college (with 5 times the population of my home town) whose majority of students came from more academically challenging high schools than mine.

As it turns out, longer term radical transitions in the radio programming field were well underway by 1956, and this article, being basically about AM programming, will be about those changes. Some changes in the nature of my listening were because of my geographical move; many were due to the huge shifts in the broadcasting industry. And some changes I noticed were because of my previously limited exposure to what had already been happening in larger cities and more eastern locations before those changes hit the upper Midwest hinterlands.

Two major changes in radio programming were occurring in 1956. One was the expanding penetration of television into America's leisure time; therefore the golden age of radio was rapidly coming to an end. The other major change was the reflection in radio broadcasting of the changes in the music industry; crooners, standards, music of Broadway and Hollywood, swing, big time bands, tin pan alley, jazz, all overlapping together to influence pop music, were being replaced by rock and roll. Subsequently rock and roll was replaced by its younger, tougher, harder sibling, rock; however that evolution during the 1960s and later was less specifically defined than the radio revolution from what is now known as music of your life or nostalgia music to the rock n' roll era, from tin pan alley to R&B influences.

A minor change in radio programming was to be a result of the upcoming growth in the number of sports teams and the westward movement of existing teams.

Transistorization (another new word according to my spellchecker) undoubtedly had an effect on radio programming as well, and has likely been the most significant technological change since tube receivers replaced crystal receivers. However, I don't have much to say about its specific impact on programming. Obviously the ability to produce smaller portables with good sound and low power usage led to more music being carried everywhere and to sports casts going wherever the fans went. On the other hand, it would seem that it would have helped the soap opera format as it became easier than ever for a devoted fan to carry the story around from place to place. Didn't happen; radio soap opera died absolutely when "Ma Perkins" wrapped on the day

after Thanksgiving in 1960.

The listening experiences I refer to in this article were mostly on table sets with "all-American 5" tube combinations, or on whatever sets came with the cheap used cars I relied on in my college years - '48 Chevy, '51 Studebaker, '54 Chevy, '57 Ford. The introduction of transistors didn't affect me much until the 60s. Although I had a small radio business in my basement during high school, when I finally got serious about my education and went to college, I left all my old tubes and sets and parts in South Dakota, where they were subsequently thrown out or given away when my parents left the town of my childhood. During college, my radio involvement was almost only as a listener. I had a few spare parts, and rigged some switches and speakers so I could listen to baseball on the outside porch. Being on a tight budget, I bought a 78 rpm turntable for 50 cents or so and let one of the rotating parts near the motor run against a file for about a week full time so that I could reduce the speed in order to play long play records which I could borrow free from the library. The amplifier was a set of wires running to the pins of an amplifier tube in a table model Admiral. Only problem was that by the time the spindle was reduced to the point that the speed got down to about 33 rpm, the phono motor burned out. End of experiment (although I liked the science of it) and I decided that I was more interested in radio than in records.

My radio instinct though continued as demonstrated in my habit of taking whichever table model I used out of its cabinet, so I could see the tubes glowing and the variable condenser plates meshing. The terms "boatanchors" and "firebottles" for antique radios and vacuum tubes weren't in use yet, but I enjoy the terms. Listening in the dark by the glow of the

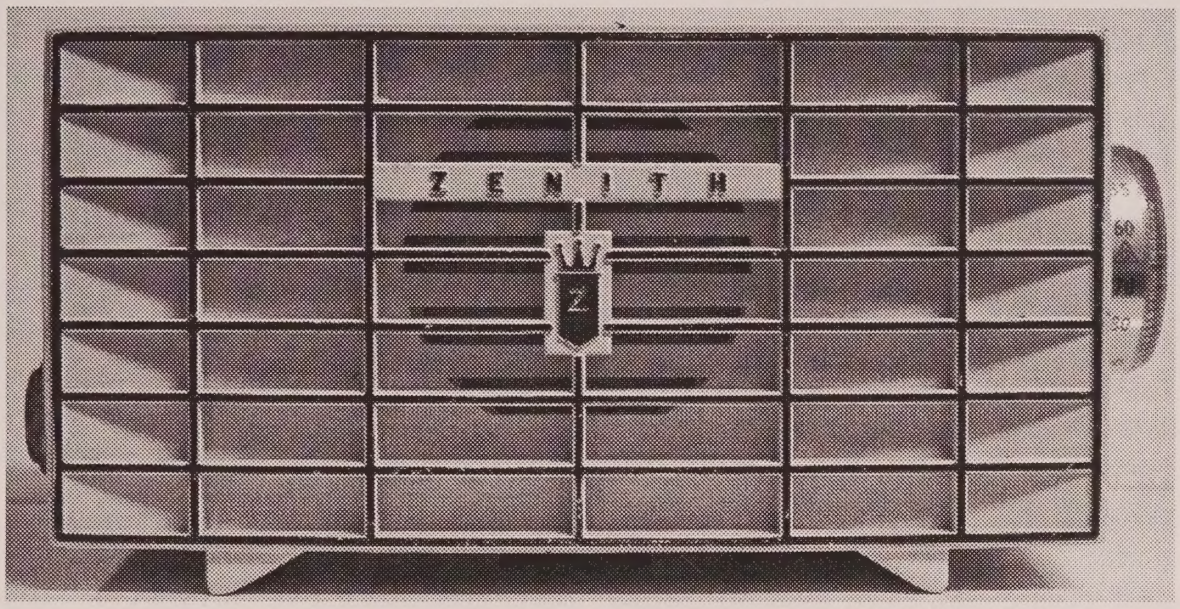
tubes was one of the least expensive and most enjoyable pleasures that I had in those days. And sound quality of a properly-engineered AM station as heard on a good, medium-priced tube-model, table or console, with a good 6 inch or larger speaker could be surprisingly mellow.

About ten years ago in California I occasionally heard the Kadidlehoppers, a West coast ham network named after a Red Skelton character. On Saturday afternoons, they had 30 minutes dedicated to buying and selling old radios and other old electronic equipment. The segment was introduced with dramatic and oratorical tones as "Radios That Glow in the Dark." So I know that I was not alone in enjoying the simple pleasure of seeing the tubes at work. In fact I still remember my excitement at about the age of 12 when I found out that radios worked outside their cabinets, which is not true of every invention.

Advanced electronics achievements led to the growth of the audiophile field. Hi-fi became a frequently used phrase in the late 40s and audiophile magazines emerged. Long play records and the evolution of FM broadcasting, both beginning in the 40s, contributed to the growth of the hi-fi culture. Stereo records and equipment came along later. The opinions that solid state sounds are not as warm or as full or as mellow as sounds produced by hollow state (tube) equipment are intriguing, but I have no personal opinion on that. I like the possibility of that being true, but then my usual leaning toward the "newer is not always better" position has been known to get in the way of good science. I have an abstract curiosity about audio fidelity, but I am more personally interested in program content than in sound quality. To be otherwise would not to be a short wave listener or an AM listener and Dxer.

This piece about Grand Rapids will include data unique to Grand Rapids, but broadcasting changes were sweeping the entire country. Minor differences in programming have always existed from region to region (not many hourly oats, wheat, corn, and cattle market reports outside of the Midwest farm country or the Southwest ranch country), but the biggest music, news talk, sports talk, network versus local content, advertising, and format trends hit the nation at about the same time, starting from the coasts and in the cities, and moving across the country and into the heartland. The changes were caused by network and music industry strategy decisions, as affected by the huge influence of television, changing demographics, and the growth of teenager income and spending levels.

During my last two years in high school in South Dakota, changes were occurring in the radio world but I did not notice them then. I recognized them later in hindsight. At the time, my interests were broadening and my personal listening habits were changing, from after school adventure serials and evening detective shows and comedies toward more music, days and evenings. If I thought about it at the time, I would have presumed that my interests were changing because of my age. I didn't particularly notice



that the availability and variety of programming choices were also changing, and I had yet to realize that radio of the future would be drastically different from radio of the Golden Age of 1930 to 1950, and that radio programming as I had known it all my life was on the way out.

So what listening conditions did I leave? My listening had been done in a state with no television stations, only 15 radio stations, no FM stations. Only one of those SD stations had an evening signal covering my town. Many of the rest were daytime only or, at 250 watts on graveyard frequencies, too far to reach us at night without the clutter of many other signals. In fact the station in our capital city of Pierre was only 200 watts (the only 200 watter listed in a late 40s edition of *White's Radio Log* of all American, Canadian, and Mexican stations), but too far away from us to have been heard at any power less than 10,000 watts. However our nighttime listening was enhanced by the huge unobstructed flat spaces of the prairies allowing us to listen to 50,000 watt stations from Chicago to Salt Lake City, from Minneapolis to Mexico.

Day and night we had a strong CBS signal. ABC was strong, but days only, basically unavailable at night, overall with little prominence in our listening lives. NBC had a moderate signal during the day, was usually catchable at night although we might need to switch from Chicago to Dallas to Denver to Albuquerque to New Orleans to Salt Lake City mid-program due to signal fadeout. Our nearest station, 250 watts, 40 miles away but considered our local, had a strong signal all day with a lot of Mutual Broadcasting System programming and requested music, but it was impossible to receive after sunset.

A select synopsis of network programming in the early fifties: weekdays ABC had a variety of music and homemaker programs during the day, including the famous Don McNeil and "The Breakfast Club". CBS and NBC were mostly soap operas all day

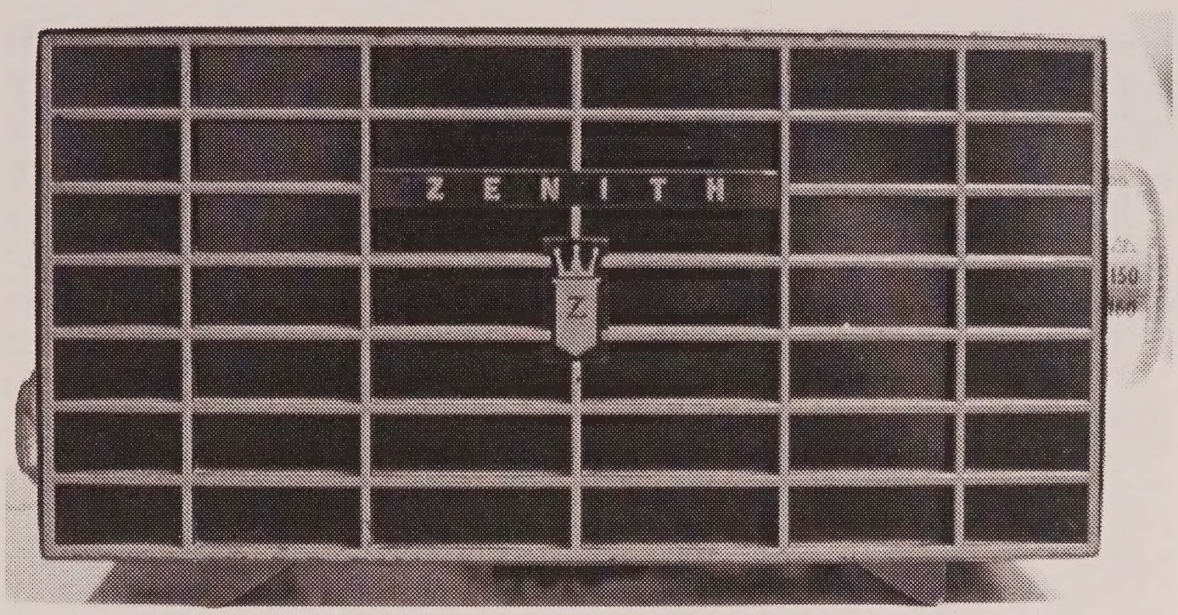
plus Arthur Godfrey 90 minutes every day on CBS. Mutual carried a lot of after school kid shows like "Wild Bill Hickok" and "Straight Arrow" plus various music shows, "Queen for a Day", "Bob and Ray", and the "Game of the Day" every afternoon during the baseball season. Nights: all networks had variety, music, drama, quiz shows, or comedians during prime time, which was an unknown phrase back then, and they carried live dance bands from a variety of hotels and nightclubs from around 10:30 until midnight. News or commentary was about three times a day for 15 or 30 minutes per session. Not much of the five minutes of news every hour concept existed yet. CBS had Edward R. Murrow, Eric Sevareid, Bob Trout, and Lowell Thomas for news. Mutual had Fulton Lewis, Jr. and Gabriel Heatter for news or commentary. Those are the ones I heard regularly; I didn't hear the ABC and NBC newscasts often. News or gossip, Walter Winchell and Drew Pearson were both on ABC Sundays. Paul Harvey had graduated from Chicago radio to ABC, where he still is, amazingly.

Sunday mornings tended toward religious programming all morning, drama or classical music in the afternoons. Saturday afternoon was the Metropolitan Opera on ABC. Weekend evenings on the networks were very similar to weekday evenings.

Local programming was a lot of grain and cattle prices and weather reports. The remainder was mostly records or public service shows like the "Singing Sergeants". Instead of tight formats, most stations had a variety of music. Country, pop, and polkas were often heard on the same station; many played a military march once a day at breakfast time. One South Dakota station, WNAX Yankton, had its own live band or two, playing daily on the radio and doing community dances off air. Their most famous group was the WNAX Bohemian Band. That station also carried Saturday night and Sunday afternoon versions of the "Missouri Valley Barn Dance". Lawrence Welk was a South Dakota lad who got his start on WNAX and the "Missouri Valley Barn Dance".

What did I move to in 1956? Grand Rapids radio listening was a whole new world compared to rural and small town South Dakota naturally. GR had 6 AM stations and we could also hear at least 6 Chicago stations, 2 Milwaukee stations, and a Detroit station or two. I heard occasionally, but have little memory of, the small city Michigan stations broadcasting from Holland, Grand Haven, Muskegeon, and Lansing. I do remember WJBL Holland having been told that the call letters came from the names Jerome, Bud, and Louie, sons of the station owner. GR may have had an FM station or two but I knew no one who listened to FM or even had an FM receiver until 1960.

The 6 AM stations were, from left to right across your radio dial, WJEF, WOOD, WLAV, WGRD, WMAX, and WFUR. Some of us referred to them as Jeff, Wood, Laugh, Max, and Fur. We didn't have a nickname for WGRD; their call letters didn't lend themselves to a pronounceable abbreviation we thought, but decades later



I realized that they were based on the "grand" in Grand Rapids, of course.

What I will relate on the programming of these stations is based on what I remember of what I heard. My schedule was erratic as I usually worked, often up to 40 hours weekly, usually at more than one job, while attending college fulltime. Therefore I could be sleeping or working or studying at any time of the day or night. My classes were mostly scattered around weekday working hours, but I took some evening courses occasionally. But a radio was on when I was studying or driving to work or in our 5 or 6 hour sessions in the drafting room of our Engineering Drawing course, station and volume controlled by pre-engineering student democratic rules. Depending on the job, I frequently was able to listen while working. During school vacation periods, I worked more hours, but also had more free time, which was spent fishing, on a beach, reading, or sleeping. But when I was awake my free time was accompanied by radio, and back then, never by television.

WJEF, relatively low power, at 1260, was CBS. Fetzer, a well-known name in Michigan communications and business circles, owned it. Fetzer also had a very good signal into Grand Rapids from WKZO 590 Kalamazoo. I remember WJEF mainly for carrying Detroit Tigers baseball. I believe that they also carried Detroit Lions football. In general, they broadcast Godfrey and soaps all day during the week, and the last of the CBS old time radio type shows at night---"Yours Truly Johnny Dollar", "Gunsmoke", "Gene Autry", "Our Miss Brooks", "Amos 'n Andy", "Life with Luigi", and every weekday night, the creative, entertaining, and almost forgotten by now, Robert Q. Lewis. The last of their network dramas, variety shows, and soaps expired in 1960, along with the similar offerings on the other networks. And on Saturday, WJEF played the Top 40 songs of the week for a time beginning in 1956.

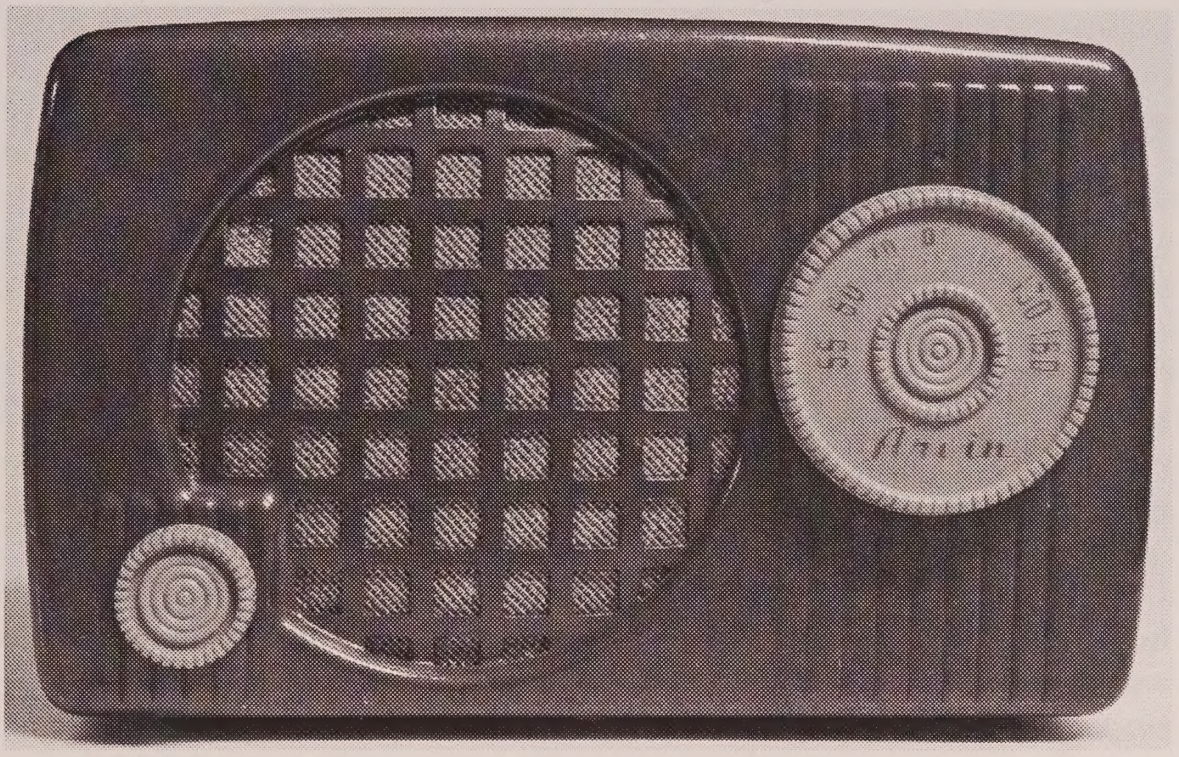
WOOD, the call letters based on the Grand Rapids history and tradition of

furniture production, was medium powered, 1300 on the dial, NBC. WOOD is still going strong as a news talk station. It had the biggest signal of the GR stations, and probably the most esteemed reputation. At 6 a.m. or earlier, it carried a fascinating daily 30 minutes or so of a man describing the early fur-trading, French, and Indian history of the area, interesting to listen to or return to sleep to. Days on WOOD, it was "Grand Central Station" or "Welcome Travelers", and otherwise almost wall to wall soaps until the late 50s. Nights were NBC shows until they expired, including in the early evening, "One Man's Family" until its final broadcast. During the dinner hour, it had a great polka broadcast (back then the Hit Parade had occasional polkas by Wayne King or Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians—remember Oh Ja, Das Ist Der Lichtensteiner Polka, Mein Schatz?). I remember the sponsor of the polka show as being announced as "Man oh Man oh Manischevitz." Remember sweet wines like Mogen David and Manischevitz before chardonnays and zinfandels were in style? WOOD carried Detroit Red Wings hockey, a team unknown to me until then in a league I had never heard of in South Dakota. WOOD also was the home of Calvin College Knights basketball games. They carried Michigan Wolverines football. WOOD was the station people turned to for weather news and school closings; it was, and is, highly respected. And on weekends, WOOD broadcast a TOP 40 playlist for a short time in 1956 or 1957.

In 1956, an example of innovative radio thinking popped up when NBC initiated "Monitor", (carried by WOOD), a well received program for at least 10 years. "Monitor" carried a variety of news and information pieces. Comedians with 5-minute segments participated: Fibber McGee and Molly at first, Mike Nichols and Elaine May in later years. Saturday nights had a live from Nashville segment of the "Grand Ol Opry". The beauty of the program was the ability of affiliates to move in and out of the "Monitor" programming all weekend.

Next, WLAV, 1340 kilohertz, ABC affiliate. WLAV programming consisted mainly of recordings. Tom Quain was a local favorite morning personality for a while. Martin Block played records out of New York on one ABC afternoon program, but network radio brought nothing to the disc jockey profession that couldn't be done locally as well. WLAV did have the "Breakfast Club" with Don McNeill and Aunt Fanny and the daily march around the breakfast table. This was live from a Chicago hotel for several decades, maybe 35 years, ending in the 70s, although I don't know how long it was on WLAV. .

Although Mutual in the 30s and ABC in the 40s carried a small number of soap operas, most soaps, up to 20 a day on each network, were on NBC and CBS. These met tight specifications, being 15 minute broadcasts, usually none starting before 9 a.m. or ending after 5 p.m. with very little interruption by other types of programs sponsored almost always by a soap or other cleaning product,



stories that never really ended, a daily production, 5X per week, with plots that evolved slowly and were described often so that a busy housewife could miss a day or two, but still catch up to the story line when she returned to the radio. They were invariably accompanied by emotive organ music.

Either I love to digress, or I hate to digress but cannot control myself. In either event, here is a soap opera digression. Without going to the web or a book, the following soap opera titles are in the clutter of my mind: "Ma Perkins", "Our Gal Sunday", "The Romance of Helen Trent", "The Second Mrs. Burton", "Portia Faces Life", "The Search for Happiness", "Young Widder Brown", "Lorenzo Jones and his wife Bel", the "Guiding Light', "Life Can be Beautiful", "Young Dr. Malone", the "Road of Life", "Mary Noble", "Backstage Wife" (or the Bob and Ray version, "Mary Backstage, Noble Wife"), "Stella Dallas", "Hilltop House", "Wendy Warren and the News" (the star read the news for the first third of the program, then segued into drama), "One Man's Family", and "Pepper Young's Family". I am not sure but "Days of Our Lives" and "The Secret Storm" and "As the World Turns", may also have been on radio before their TV debuts. If you remember these programs, you probably deserve some kind of prize. If you remember which were on CBS and which were on NBC, you probably should get a life.

In the last half of the 50s, WOOD and WJEF kept the network soapy offerings when they were still available. ABC and Mutual had not competed as soap networks for many years. But in 1957, ABC took a final shot at the genre and I heard it several times on WLAV. It was called something like "True Romances", and deviated from the standard soap

by being 30 minutes in length and by having a complete story in each show. But the effort didn't last long. And yes, WLAV too had its own Top 40 playlist for a time, played nightly for a while without local competition in that time slot.

WLAV, WJEF, and WOOD were full-service community stations, broadcasting from 6 a.m. or earlier until midnight, carrying a variety of programs.

The other 3 Grand Rapids stations (WGRD, WMAX, and WFUR) broadcast daylight hours only, and were unaffiliated with any of the 4 major networks. Although their programming was more varied than many formats of today, they were not quite as full-service as the network affiliates who had more extensive local and world news.

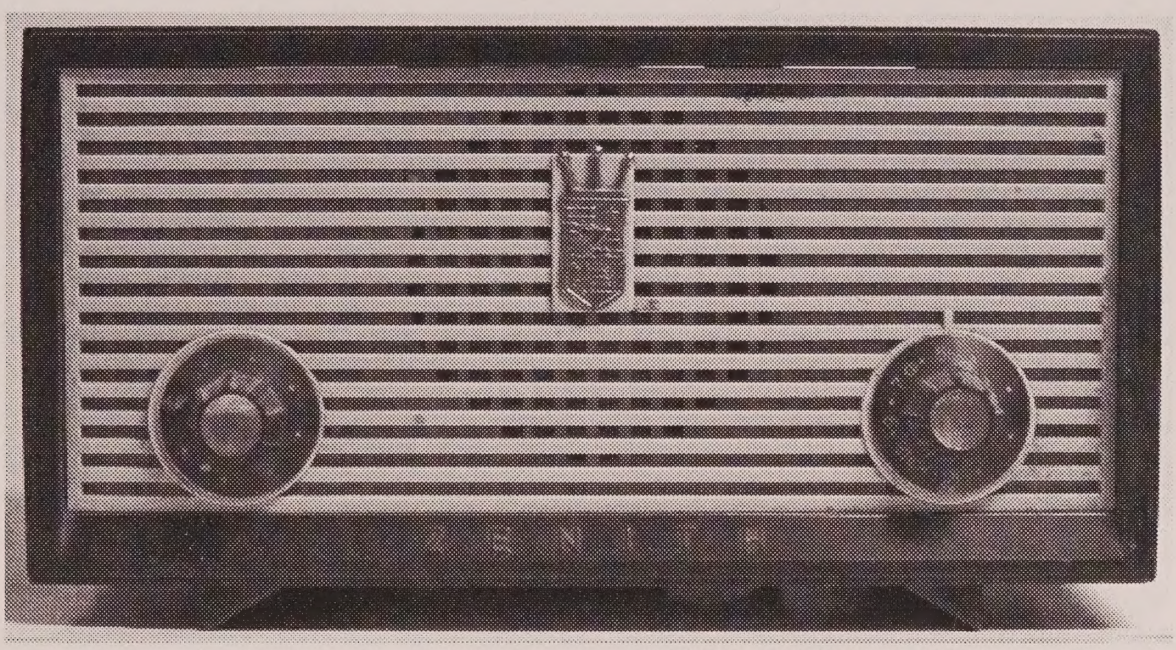
Next on the dial was WGRD at 1410, the call letters still active in GR on FM. WGRD was a music station only, but had an eclectic variety. It had standards, crooners and instrumentals, in the morning daily; a great cowpoke type guy from 11 to 1 doing current western hits (seldom described as country then, but sometimes called hillbilly, Western, or cowboy music). Afternoons each day a Top 40 playlist was played in order, #40 through #1.

Drive time was not a concept or a meaningful time segment yet as mornings were not necessarily the most listened to time of day. In fact, the music seemed to get faster and more exuberant as the day wore on. But mornings did tend to some more well-known or well-publicized personalities. And as network offerings were being replaced by music programming, disc jockeys began the evolution to being personalities, and the personalities playing the music became more important. WGRD's star was the Happy Hollander, Big Bud Lindemann.

WGRD had a hugely popular Sunday afternoon show, targeting the large Polish population of the city, with waltzes, polkas, and schottisches hosted by Uncle Yashoo. Yashoo frequently hosted live broadcasts of popular Lake Michigan Sunday afternoon cruises complete with orchestras.

In the fall of 1956, WGRD had a 15-minute soccer program each Saturday morning. It consisted of a man with a heavy Dutch brogue reporting the scores of several amateur adult teams. The teams, many comprised of recent Dutch or Polish arrivals, played in various public parks on weekends. At the time, soccer was basically non-existent in the upper Midwest except for some male college teams and recently arrived European amateurs. High school teams, youth leagues, pro teams were yet to arrive on the American scene.

WMAX was at 1480. It signed off at sunset, but signed on at 6 a.m. year round, with an hour of hard core United Auto Workers rhetoric, condemning most actions of the auto companies, especially Fisher Body, subsidiary of General Motors, the largest auto industry plant in Grand Rapids. Coming from farm country, where except for a strike every 2 or 3 years by the Meatpackers against John Morrell at the Sioux Falls stockyards,



we never heard anything about any unions and had only the vaguest concept as to what they were. Growing up in a farm community fostering a strong work ethic for reasons of economic survival and because of parental respect, I was amazed when first hearing such vehement language aimed at an organization providing better than average income to its employees who were doing the complaining and criticizing. Because of my lack of labor relations knowledge, I was totally intrigued by the UAW radio program, disagreeing with most of what I understood, understanding little, and wishing I had time to go back to sleep for a few hours. (I have always listened across the dial, so I seldom listened to any programs, including this one, every day. I listened to most available stations many times each month. I did not restlessly tune from station to station all the time like sometimes is done by the person holding the TV remote today. When I tuned to a station, I usually stayed with it a few hours or most of a day or until the next sports broadcast on another station, but didn't necessarily go back to the same station the next day).

After its abrasive sign on show, WMAX had standards in the morning, and an 11 to 1 show hosted by Mr. Unknown. He was great, playing Jimmy Durante musical and comedy stuff for example, and other show business material of the 40s and early 50s and talked at length about the show business and music and jazz artists of that era, interspersing his comments with related records. I never had any idea who Mr. Unknown was, and don't remember anyone else ever mentioning having listened to him.

WMAX had perhaps the most popular Top 40 programming, also played in descending order every afternoon. The Top 40 was a major part of their format; I think they played it through mornings and again afternoons for a time, after the morning standards slot ended at 9. It also had a reputation of catering to the

black 30% of Grand Rapids' population. WMAX did not have an urban contemporary or rhythm and blues format, but when playing outside the Top 40 lists, their music had a little more African-American flavor than any other station in GR. And they carried black gospel music and worship formats on Sunday. On Saturday afternoons however, Purty Patty Boyd played country music, and definitely called it hillbilly. One cold day, Purty Patty read the weather forecast and told us the temperatures were "going way down into the one numbers." This could be more grammatically described as the single digit range.

The last GR station on the dial was WFUR at 1570, still there and still with a religious format. At the time, full-time religious formats were very rare. Most stations had some religious programming, usually a lot on Sunday mornings, plus from 5 minutes to an hour each morning right after sign-on, and maybe singing of the Lord's Prayer or some other hymn at sign-off. WMBI, operated by the Moody Bible Institute, in Chicago was a full-time religious station, but there were none in South Dakota and very few in other states, especially outside of the largest cities. But WFUR, also named after the furniture city concept, was a very professional sounding Christian station. It did not carry shouters or hucksters or beggars, but a lot of inspirational and academic theology, excellent choir music, a marching band music show daily, news, and quite a bit of secular or religious classical music. It had some Dutch language programming on some Sunday afternoons, in recognition of another major ethnic group in the city.

One of my radio quirks was to be intrigued by programming from 6 to 8 p.m. during the summer months on daytime only stations. The programs seemed kind of mystical, non-existent during the winter, realities only temporarily as autumn approached, getting ready to disappear as darkness approached and thickened. As an actual matter, they were usually only recorded music programs, maybe with a disc jockey holding over from the afternoon slot, maybe with little or no announcing, maybe introduced as "an interlude of recorded music for your listening pleasure." The magic is gone if it was there at all, especially now that daytimers are very rare. I don't know the schedules of most stations in or near Grand Rapids, but there are a lot more AM stations available for listening there across the dial, including new GR stations, old dial positions with changed call letters, and new stations from suburbs like Ada, Kentwood, Zeeland, and Rockford. I don't believe that many are daytimers.

List A: The Singing Rage Patti Page, Theresa Brewer, Spike Jones, Jo Stafford, the Andrews Sisters, the McGuire Sisters, Giselle McKenzie, Vic Damone, Tony Bennett, Paul Weston, Frank, Bing, Eddie Fisher, Johnny Ray, Woody Herman, Earl Garner, Errol "Fatha" Hines, Nat "King" Cole, Julius LaRosa, Rosemary Clooney, Gale Storm, the Freddy Martin Orchestra, the Ames Brothers, Ella Fitzgerald, Gene Krupa, Bix Beiderbecke, Tex Beneke, Harry

James, the Glenn Miller Orchestra, Louis Armstrong, Stan Kenton, Dean Martin, Al Martino, Bob Crosby and the Bobcats, the Three Suns, the Four Aces, Lawrence Welk, Tommy and Sammy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Pete Fountain, Les Paul and Mary Ford, Miss Peggy Lee, Julie London, Paul Whiteman, Lena Horne, Perry Como, Margaret Whiting, Doris Day, Guy Lombardo, Dinah Shore, Percy Faith, Mantovani...

List B: Little Richard, Elvis, Fats, the Everly Brothers, Brenda Lee, the Platters, Jerry Lee Lewis, Wilson Pickett, Paul Anka, Pat Boone, Dion and the Belmonts, Bo Diddley, Jan & Dean, Patience & Prudence, Mickey & Sylvia, Tab Hunter, Ricky Nelson, Richie Valens, Bobby Darin, Buddy Knox, Danny and the Juniors, Sheb Wooley, the Big Bopper, Connie Francis, the Dell Vikings, Johnny Mathis, Harry Belafonte, Sam Cooke, Frankie Avalon, Fabian...

Easy for most of you to figure out where I am leading. The A list is typical of records played on radio in the first half of the Fifties. The B list is typical of the second half. A little country or hillbilly crossover to the A list by Hank Williams; a little crossover to the B list by Jimmy Rodgers, Johnny Cash, or Marty Robbins.

The airplay lists are the best way I know to demonstrate the revolutionary transition to rock n' roll that hit the airwaves. The music itself changed, of course. Your Hit Parade became the Top Forty. But the music consumer demographic profile of music listeners and buyers also changed, from young and middle aged adults primarily to mostly teens and early 20s. And the younger audience had more discretionary income to spend on items like records than young people had ever had before. The importance of music in a radio station's programming profile increased tremendously. Television took the variety, quiz, drama including soaps, and comedy

shows away from AM radio, which looked around at what was left and became for a time primarily a recorded music medium. News and community services and sports continued to have a place in radio, but every station on the AM band had at least some music programming. Full time news, sports, talk, celebrity talk, news talk, or sports talk formats were yet to be created. Record libraries, and music playing personalities, not network affiliations, became the most valuable element of a station's essence.

Another opinion digression: not only because Spike Jones is on the A list or because the Big Bopper is on the B list would most agree that the music of both lists was more fun and provided more listening pleasure than much of the music of the 60s and beyond. Pop music may have improved in some ways and as a business it has certainly grown and prospered, but I think it lost a lot of appeal as it began to take itself too seriously and the artists began making statements and selling philosophy instead of having fun while making music. When is the last time you have heard humor in a current hit? I am resisting the temptation to use any song titles in this article to make my point, as the music artist and soap opera lists are already more than enough of lists.

Now did you notice that for a time every Grand Rapids station, except WFUR with its religious format, had a Top 40 playlist? In other words, for a time even stations without a Top 40 format played the top 40 songs daily or at least once a week. Five of six stations had similar but not identical Top 40 playlists, in spite of other significant differences in programming style. And many consumer teenagers tried to listen to, and keep up with, all the lists. The lists changed weekly and were similar to one another, but never identical, often with 3 or 4 Elvis songs in the top 10 for a long time, probably taken from Billboard or Variety magazines. But each station claimed superiority for its version, tweaked a little from the national lists by allegedly tracking record sales at local retail outlets. And except when college or work or young women interfered with my attention level, I actually paid a modest amount of attention to differences and deviations in the lists of WJEF, WOOD, WLAV, WGRD, and WMAX. Without worshipping him, I enjoyed the early Elvis, Pat Boone was okay, and I thoroughly liked the music of Fats Domino.

However by 1958, the Top 40 concept was de-emphasized at most of these stations; WGRD and WMAX continued playing the Top 40 in order daily as I remember, while the other stations carved out their own niches and created their own programming styles.

In the description of the network programming available in Grand Rapids, note that Mutual was not around. Mutual (MBS, the Mutual Broadcasting System) was quite different from CBS, NBC, and ABC. The other three had bigger budgets and more celebrities and were actually corporations. Mutual started as a loose affiliation of a few big city stations and in a low-budget way evolved into being a network. Originally composed

of powerhouses WGN in Chicago, WLW in Cincinnati, and WOR New York, it became a small city favorite, eventually having more affiliates than any other network. But most of the affiliates were in very small markets, put out 1000 watts or less, and many were daytimers. One reason for its small town popularity, in addition to its low cost, was its baseball. Large cities had their own teams with broadcasts; small town America enjoyed a game every day with different teams every day as its loyalties were more to the sport itself than to a particular team. I don't know anyone in my town that had ever been to a major league stadium or even seen a telecast of a game, but we listened to every pitch of every World Series and knew all about the Dodgers, Yankees, Joe DiMaggio, Stan Musial, and Herb Score. We didn't really have a local favorite team, until WNAX began broadcasting Kansas City Athletics games sporadically (weekends only so they would not pre-empt farm market programs and soap operas) when that team moved to Kansas City from Philadelphia in 1954. They are now the Oakland team.

Mutual was also the home of a large lineup of Sunday afternoon action programs, including various programs with the word "detective" or "adventure" in the title, and the "Green Hornet", and the famous, "The Shadow". So between detectives and baseball, how could it not help be the favorite network of young males?

After moving to Michigan, my Mutual exposure totally diminished as none of the Chicago, Detroit, Grand Rapids, or Milwaukee regulars that I knew of were affiliated with it. Mutual had the small towns and the Don Lee Mutual branch in the West headquartered in Los Angeles; but they apparently didn't have the sophistication to be a big city network. Each of the cities mentioned above had local or regional major league sports broadcasts, and with the demise of non-music network programming, there was no need for a Mutual. Since the mid-fifties, my only notice of it included some all night Larry King broadcasts heard during the 70s and 80s, and frequently while traveling I heard top of the hour Mutual news. This ended in the late 90s when the network disappeared or was absorbed permanently by Westwood, after having been owned at various times by Chris Craft (power boats) and 3M.

What non-locals did we listen to in Grand Rapids? We listened to WJR, 760 Detroit, flagship station of the Tigers, Lions, and Red Wings. Typical of major big city stations, WJR still had its own musicians on the payroll, its own orchestra for live broadcasts. But surprisingly this major and famous voice of Detroit ("from high atop the golden tower of the Fisher Theater, the Great Voice of the Great Lakes") was of little interest in Grand Rapids, as GR had its own outlets for the Detroit sports teams except for the Pistons.

During the day we could listen also to WTMJ 620 Milwaukee as well as WOKY 920 from that city. And of course, Chicago.

Grand Rapids was slightly influenced by Detroit media and other

aspects of its culture. GR was loyal to the Detroit pro sports teams, and shared in most economic aspects of the auto industry. But Detroit radio was not a factor in Grand Rapids as the Lions, Tigers, and Red Wings had GR outlets. Detroit newspapers were not too common as GR had quite a good daily, the Grand Rapids Press, and the Chicago papers were available—Tribune, Daily News, Sun-Times, American.

Because of the newspapers and radio, Chicago was a major pop cultural influence in Grand Rapids. Because radio signals travel well over water, many Chicago stations' signals shot over Lake Michigan and boomed into GR like locals. Therefore Cubs and White Sox fans were abundant. One-day or weekend trips to visit a big city were much more often to Chicago with its many tourist attractions than to the equidistant Detroit.

Chicago radio as heard in GR: WIND with its great call letters and pre-rock pop music and famous personality Howard Miller at 560 was a music-lover's favorite. By now, it has a long-time Spanish tradition, being one of the first Chicago voices to make that language transition.

WMAQ 670 was NBC's famous Chicago voice, carried varied music and other programming, a quality station. It carried the NBC soaps as long as they existed, and evolved in the 60s to an all-country music format for a time, before becoming one of the early all-news stations in the Midwest.

The fantastic WGN at 720, quite easily heard at night 900 miles from GR in my hometown in South Dakota, was one of the stations carried over from my childhood. WGN had the wonderful Wally Phillips who played current hits with great patter and chatter, lots of hilarious sound effects and injected voice bites and sound bits. His listening territory was huge, and he worked at it, playing requests for the girls in the Calvin College coops (student housing) for example, even though there were more than 100 colleges as close or closer to Chicago and for whom he was also willing to play requests, not to mention all the high schools in his broadcasting range. WGN, like other big city stations, had a large number of celebrities, known as well-known personalities then, Franklyn McCormack being another example. WGN had a highly respected farm audience which it earned with good agricultural reporting, and I believe it is still doing well at keeping both city and country audience segments informed.

At 780, the CBS station, WBBM, (why do I like double call letters so much?), billed as the WBBM Air Theater in the days when it carried the old time radio dramas and comedies and really was a theater of the airwaves, had Godfrey and soaps until 1960. In the late fifties, it had a personality, named John Gibson I believe, who was unusual in that he talked live on air for 5 or 6 hours a day without call-in listeners or music. He just talked, kind of like an extended Godfrey show without the music. Even now, although there are all news and all talk formats and many AM stations with no music ever, I don't know of any persons doing nothing but talking for

several hours each day without call-in participation. Of course, WBBM became a prestigious all-news station, another one of the first to do so.

WGN and WBBM and other big stations had great all night music programming, sponsored by companies like American Airlines or Northwest Orient Airlines. The dulcet and intimate tones of announcers, like Pierre Andre and McCormack, talking deeply and softly about their Broadway, classical, and semi-classical selections kept me awake when driving, and made it sometimes difficult to quit listening when I really should have gone to sleep. Thousands of square miles of the US were blanketed by that kind of programming for decades, subdued late night music programs from America's big cities offering companionship to the graveyard shift workforces and to insomniacs.

WLS 890, ABC for Chicago, interesting until the 50s for time-sharing with WENR, was famous for its farm programming and especially the "WLS National Barn Dance", Saturday nights. In the 50s decade, it did a complete reinvention, losing the WENR connection, dropping the farm format, and becoming a famous hot hits station, noted by teens in many states. Dick Biondi was its immensely popular evening personality at a time when evening personalities were more popular than AM or PM drive timers. Dick may have been imitating the style of a predecessor; many definitely imitated him in Top 40 radio.

More Chicago stations heard in or near Grand Rapids, WAIT 850, not remarkable for me until it became one of the first in the Midwest to have a beautiful music format, kind of a pleasant wall-to-wall instrumental sound, imitating the typical format of many early FM stations.

WAAF 950, more double call letters, was known for quite good jazz programming and had a definite African-American flavor, Chicago style.

WCFL 1000 was a general format music station of the pre-rock variety in the late fifties. They had an extremely talented morning man in Dan Sorkin, famous in radio circles for a long time in Chicago and San Francisco, if not elsewhere. It switched in the sixties to a folk music format, a rare and short-lived format for commercial stations, but hootenannies and jamborees were a really big deal in the early 60s. Later WCFL was one of the famous rockers, heard in many states and covering the hits in the style of WLS, WABC New York, CKLW Windsor, Ontario, and many others throughout America. WCFL and others are still referred to on various music and radio related websites.

WCFL, originally owned by the Chicago Federation of Labor, migrated from general adult pop to folk to Top 40 to religion. Ownership changed; formats changed. Now that ideal dial position, 1000, in Chicago is WMVP, a sports talker and again like 50 years ago, the place that White Sox fans in the region turn to for play-by-play of their team.

Another Chicago station heard by many in GR was WJJD. I don't know why, but this station also seemed

unique to me. I don't recall where it was located exactly, but it was near1160 on the dial. It was another Chicago voice also heard in South Dakota, 700 miles to the northwest. WJJD had the double letters I liked. Its programming seemed to be kind of a Grand Ol' Opry type with a lot of huckstering of health products and long commercials, reminding me of some of the Mexican border stations. The announcers kind of shouted, but in a friendly way. It had pretty good country music, and for a time it even had Top 40 hits. It was not a daytimer as it broadcast after dark, but it had an unusual sign-off time. I remember the sign-off as being around 8 pm year around; possibly its sign-off authority was controlled by sunset time in a more western state with a station on the same frequency. The call letters no longer exist in Chicago.

Other GR regular catches were at night and included WHAS Louisville, KMOX Saint Louis, WHO Des Moines, WLW and WCKY Cincinnati, KXEL Waterloo, WSM and WLAC Nashville, WBZ Boston, WCAU Philadelphia, KDKA Pittsburgh, WWVA Wheeling, WRVA Richmond, WHAM Rochester, and the New Yorkers WABC and WCBS. The Kansas City, Denver, Albuquerque, Salt Lake City, and many Texas stations of my prairie youth were basically no longer available to me.

Some words about sports casting. I love live radio sports broadcasts of almost any kind. TV sportscasts are okay for me, but limited to select sports and teams. But on radio, almost any game or race is fine with me. However I have no respect for, or interest in, sports talk or any sports format stations except for live broadcasts. I want to hear the game itself and I do not want to listen to talk about the game or its athletes. If I am interested in more detail, I can pick up more than enough from a newspaper. The live event is the thing for me; I don't listen to, or watch, delayed broadcasts either.

Where did this sports broadcasts interest come from? Well, I worked hard when young beginning in elementary school, in the garden or the yard or the family grocery store. Games are more fun than work, so although usually working during the broadcasts, hearing a game with people actually playing instead of working and the mental image of people watching and cheering and eating hot dogs gave me a lot of pleasure. A sports broadcast can still reproduce much of that feeling for me. I also inherited an interest in sports from my dad. Sports, as I heard them in South Dakota and as I was aware of them, were high school sports usually not heard on the radio in my town except for the state basketball tournaments, major league baseball with different teams every day on the radio in season, heavyweight boxing in the era of Joe Louis, and the Indianapolis 500 races. I had some knowledge of college football in that we knew of Notre Dame, Oklahoma's 50 plus game winning streak, the Army-Navy game (I had a favorite in that game when my sister was in the Navy), but South Dakota has no college football powerhouses (in fact has no Division

I teams in any sport, which no other state can claim as even North Dakota and Alaska have Division I hockey teams) and so there was not much fan interest in college football, or basketball either. Remember that I grew up surrounded by hard-working farmers who had little leisure time and no television; sports was not a large part of life in that era. Back then I knew nothing of the NFL, NBA, or the NHL.

And an important part of my high school years: when the World Series was on, always day games back then, instead of going to class, a large radio was brought into the study hall and we listened to every pitch of every game. No wonder I had to do a lot of catch up learning in college.

So moving to Grand Rapids greatly expanded my sports interest range. I found out that the Tigers, with Al Kaline, Virgil Truck and Harvey Kuehn were on local radio, every game, day or night. No more "Mutual Game of the Day" covering all the games. I have a little nostalgia for the old Mutual names of Al Helfer and Van Patrick, but with full time Tiger coverage, I didn't really miss Mutual.

Remember 1956. Only 16 major league baseball teams existed, none west of Saint Louis until Kansas City became the home of the Athletics in 1954. The NFL was getting ready to be a national obsession, but wasn't there yet. It alone of the pro sports leagues had west coast teams, Rams and 49ers. The NHL had only 6 teams, only 4 in the US, none west of Chicago. And the NBA was pretty obscure. They were as far west as Minneapolis, but had no Chicago or Detroit team. I don't recall how many teams they had, but their team cities included Syracuse, Fort Wayne, and Rochester, not your typical media centers.

Except for the Michigan and Michigan State teams, I didn't listen to much college football because Saturdays were full workdays for me. I didn't follow the NFL much because my Sunday schedule prevented it, although I generally knew how the Lions were faring.

But baseball coverage was more than adequate for me. I could get many stations and in the summer I had more time to spend listening. Tigers on WJEF, or WKZO. Cubs on WGN with Jack Brickhouse announcing, Ernie Banks playing. White Sox on WCFL with Elston Howard calling the White Owl Wallops of Nellie Fox and Larry Doby. When they weren't playing, on to WTMJ to hear if the Braves were on with Hank Aaron, Warren Spahn, Johnny Sain, Joe, Adcock, Del Crandell, and Eddie Matthews. Games over and still had time? Try KMOX for the Cardinals, WBZ for the Red Sox, WHAM for the Yankees, WLW for the Reds, WCAU for the Phillies, or KDKA for the Pirates.

And in 1957, the Giants and the Dodgers moved to California, the beginning of a westward odyssey later supplemented by more moves and more teams. And notable to me, games beginning at 10 p.m. from Candlestick Park or Chavez Ravine, games which sometimes lasted longer than my homework duties.

The major changes in baseball since the 50s in addition to the new teams and the new locations of old teams is the demise of double headers which were scheduled very regularly and not caused only by rainouts, and the shift from 80% day games to less than 10% day games. I kind of miss having more afternoon baseball than we do, and I used to enjoy anticipating the possibility of my favorite team winning two games in one day.

Hockey? WOOD took care of the Red Wings games for me; Gordie Howe, Sid Abel, the Production Line. The Chicago Blackhawks moved around the dial a bit, but I picked them up occasionally. And on Sunday nights when all other sports events were done and it was the slowest part of the week in many ways, it seems that I could always catch the Fort Wayne Comets on the great and unique WOWO, except during the summer.

NBA? As I heard it from a Miss Kautsky of the family of the team's first owner in Indianapolis, in the late 40s the Indianapolis Kautskys moved to Fort Wayne and became the Fort Wayne Zollners. This I know more surely, that Mr. Zollner had a piston ring company (maybe or maybe not Perfect Circle) and changed the name of his team to the Fort Wayne Pistons. In 1957 or 1958, the Pistons moved to Detroit. None of this affected my listening except that after they moved to Detroit, I listened to them on WJR.

Other frequent or occasional sports listening for me included the college Saint Louis Billikins on KMOX, the University of Kentucky or Louisville University on WHAS, and high school girls basketball on WHO. Of course I listened to the Calvin basketball games WOOD, and also the Western Michigan Broncos basketball and football on WKZO. And at years end, we enjoyed the football bowl games on various network stations. There were fewer bowls and more all-star games: East West, North South, and Blue Gray. And in August every summer as baseball was wearing thin, the College All Star game, Soldiers Field, college all stars played the NFL champs, which sounds good but usually resulted in a huge stomping by the pros.

A great day in my listening memory: Thanksgiving Day, 1956. It was my first Thanksgiving away from our typical morning church service, eating Canada goose shot by my dad for dinner, and pheasant hunting in the afternoon. Instead I was sitting around Grand Rapids after dinner with another out of town classmate. For about the first time since school started, I didn't have to work or study. So naturally we listened to the radio. I remember catching the Lions game, part of the new Top 40 list on WMAX, a Thanksgiving polka special with Uncle Yashoo, and then the last half of a sports broadcast that I have never forgotten.

WCFL carried the then annual Chicago high school football championship, a game between the top public school and Catholic school teams. I don't remember the team names, but the game was played in Soldiers Field on Thanksgiving Day, 1956. The final

score was 0 to 0. The championship was awarded to the team that crossed the opponent's 20-yard line the most often, and I don't remember either if the public or Catholic school won. But I have never forgotten the concepts of that match, that playing field, and that tiebreaker.

Another digression: Chicago sports teams and their flagship stations. The Cubs seem to have been on WGN forever, and are now owned by The Tribune Company, owners of WGN; so don't look for the Cubs to move soon. But I think I remember that the Cubs were on WIND in the 40s? The Sox have been on WCFL, went to WMAQ for awhile with Harry Caray after he left Saint Louis and before he made a legend of himself with the Cubs. Then for a year or two, the Sox went to WTAQ 1300 La Grange barely hearable in all of metro Chicago. I don't know the rest of their travels, but they are now back at 1000 WMVP, former dial position of WCFL. The Bears have probably been on WMAQ, WGN, and WBBM; I'm not sure about all of these. I don't know who carried the Cardinals before they moved to Saint Louis around 1960. The Blackhawks may have been on WCFL. I am quite sure that I have heard them on WBBM and on WMAQ.

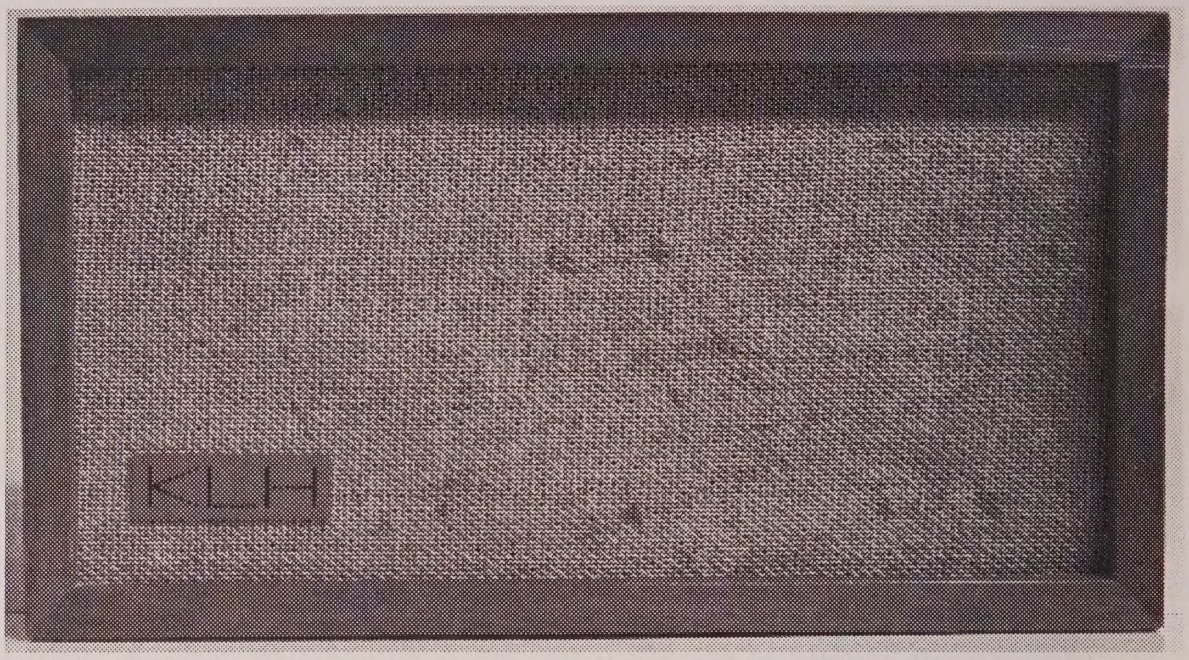
The NBA in Chicago. Remember the Chicago Zephyrs in the early 1960s? Probably not, who does? The NBA was not much back then. But the Zephyrs actually existed; games were broadcast on a FM station. They kind of failed; at any rate they became the Baltimore Bullets, now the Washington Wizards. I don't know when the Bulls showed up or who carried the games at first, but they are now on WMVP, along with the co-owned White Sox.

Well, that covers Grand Rapids radio for me until I went into the Army in 1958. When I returned in 1960 to finish college, network radio as it had been was really dead except for news and sportscasts.

Current hit music was still interesting for me, but not nearly to the extent that it had been. The tops in pops lists didn't seem to have as much variety or fun as in the past. Actually I was outgrowing the music, which was normal; I have read that most adults of all ages prefer the music that was in style when they were in high school. But sports casts were still interesting for me, and they hadn't changed as much as the music had either. In fact even today a radio baseball game is remarkable similar to a radio baseball game of the 40s, another reason that I appreciate them.

In the early 70s, a regulatory change required all AM radios sold in the US to also have FM capability. That change was a major factor in the expansion of FM broadcasting and in the number of stations although there were other 60s type influences as well.

FM broadcasting already had a tradition in Chicago by the early 60s, but was just beginning in Grand Rapids. WOOD FM with a then typical beautiful music format was probably the first, starting in 1962. Soon after, WLAV FM began, with quite bit of simulcasting of WLAV. Then WXTO,



the very professional and erudite voice of Aquinas College, and WVGR, the Grand Rapids outlet of WUOM, the University of Michigan station in Ann Arbor came along. Naturally I remember WVGR, not for its excellent classical music format, but because of its Wolverine hockey games.

In 1961 and 62, I was the Sunday board operator of WKLW FM. I was alone in its studios at the top of an old almost empty warehouse building on the non-beautified waterfront of the Grand River, from 1 p.m. until midnight signoff. If there were no tornado or other weather emergency or Conelrad alert, the station had no live announcements or any other programming during that time. My job consisted in closely following a script advising me which of several large and small tape machines and which of several turntables to turn on and off and when. Rewinding and clearing the decks for the next recording plus reading the transmitter meters and recording the data twice an hour kept me relatively busy. The format was a religion, easy listening, classical music combo. I don't know how long the station lasted.

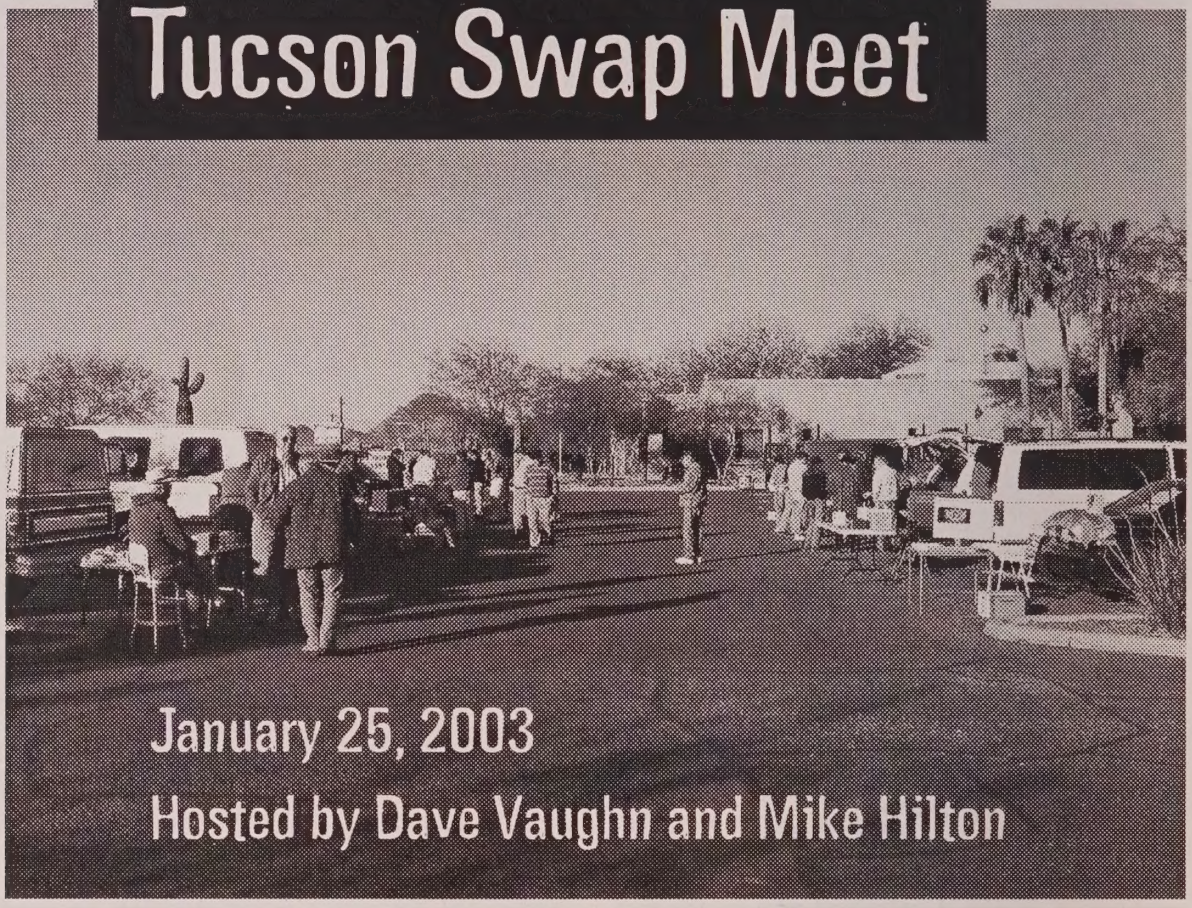
I kept my AM listening interest, and added some FM listening interest although the small number of similar formats on FM didn't foster much excitement. But my biggest change after my Army hitch came when I bought a Hallicrafters AM and short wave set, covering 530 kilohertz through 30 megahertz. It was the cold war era, I had enjoyed my military station in Europe, I had learned a fair amount of German, and these factors added to my international interest. Stations I remember receiving regularly include VOA and BBC naturally, but also Budapest, Bucharest, Prague, Bonn, Zurich, Paris, Rome, Warsaw Madrid, Stockholm. Radio Habana Cuba, pronounced with the b, was on often and on many frequencies. It is intriguing to hear it in 2003 sounding

almost exactly like it did in 1961, still ranting about the Yankee imperialist threat. Many summertime mornings I listened to CFRX, Toronto on the 6-megahertz band, simulcasting AM station CFRB. Unless there has been a recent change, Canada has several short wave stations simulcasting commercial AM stations in several provinces. It has been reported that this situation is on the way out; the short wave transmitters may not be repaired or replaced for cost and market value reasons.

So there you have my version of the radio segment of my life in Grand Rapids. I left for a job in Chicago, 9 years with RCA in Indianapolis beginning in one of the last radio receiver factories in the US, 4 years building the Alaska pipeline, working for Rockwell International in Detroit and Los Angeles, back to Alaska as a retiree consultant for British Petroleum at Prudhoe Bay, followed by kind of living in Arizona but actually teaching English in Viet Nam for a year and a half, and 2 years of training blind adults in the Philippines. Each of those locations plus Germany has some kind of radio interest for me (especially Indy, LA, and Detroit) but few match the enchantment of South Dakota and Grand Rapids radio for this long-winded writer, who may, or may not ever, write a radio article again. Thanks for listening.

Quezon City, Philippines
November 10, 2003

Tucson Swap Meet

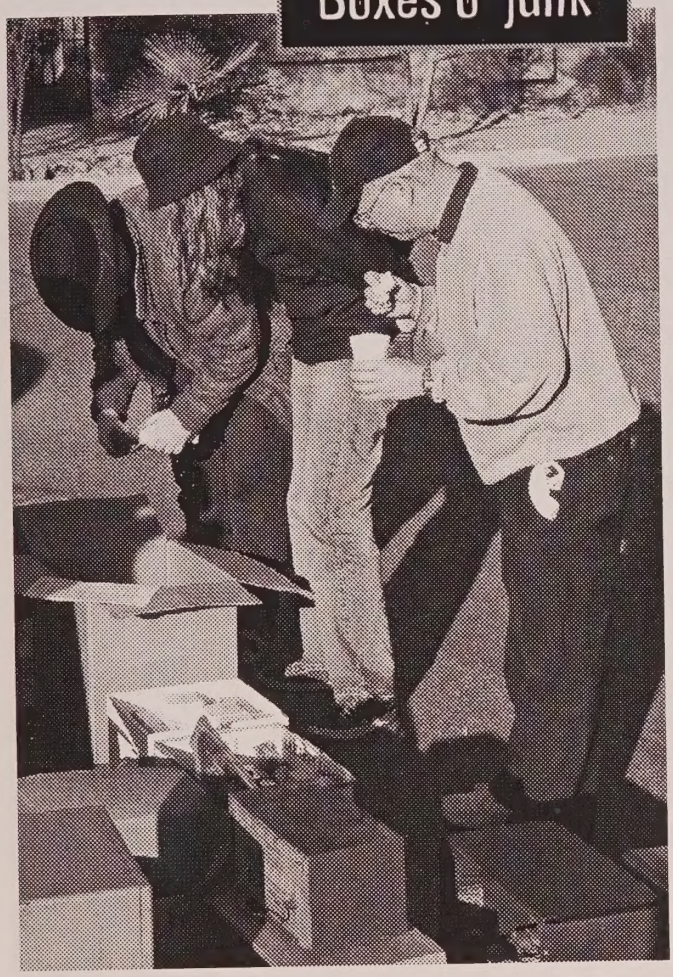


January 25, 2003

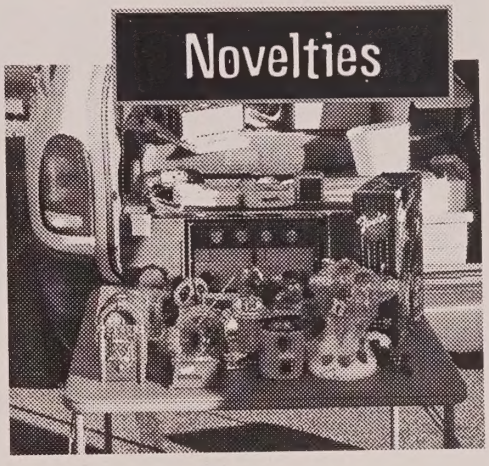
Hosted by Dave Vaughn and Mike Hilton

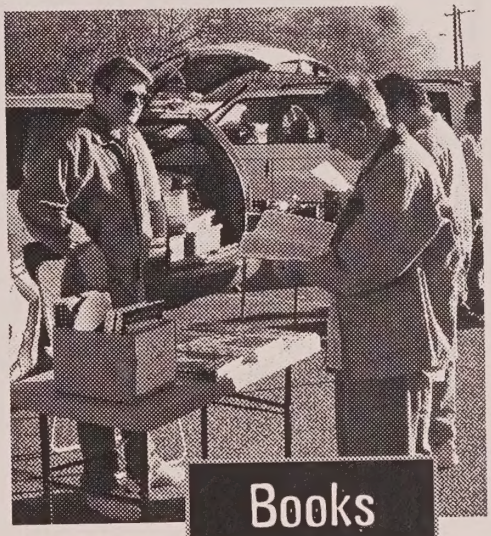
'Scopes

Boxes o' junk



Novelties



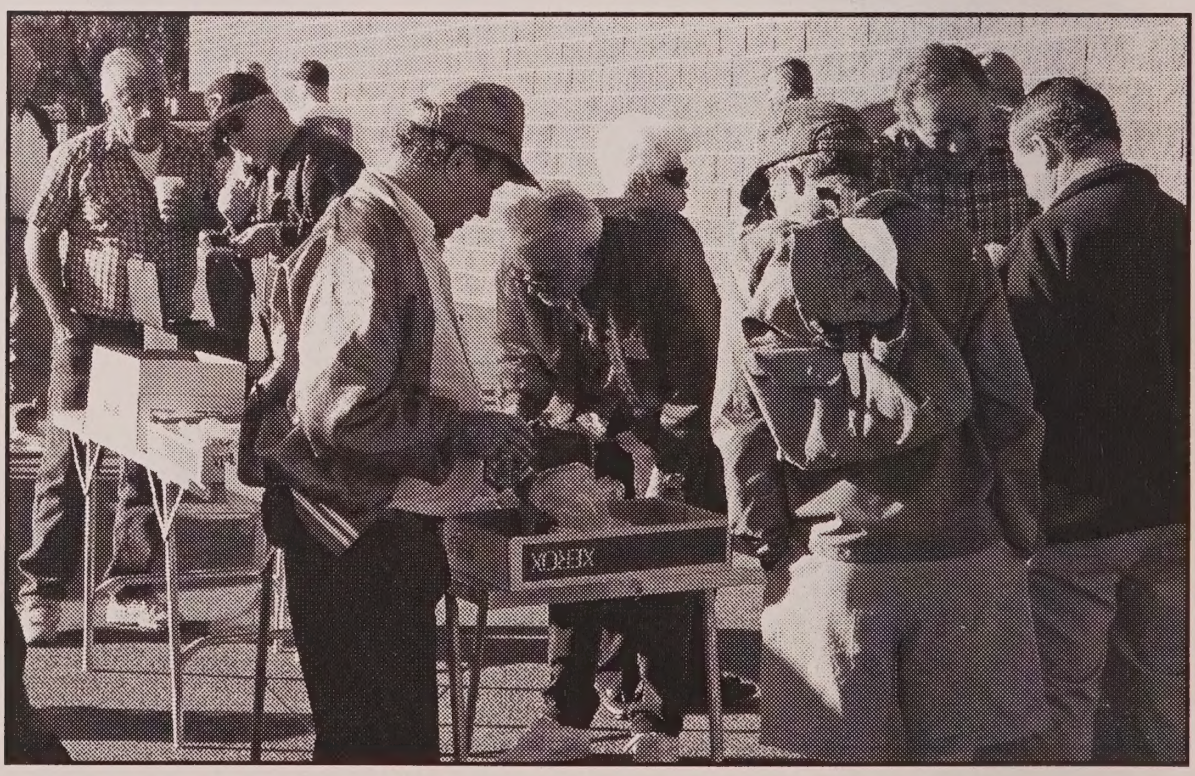


Books

Rider's

Spring Swap Meet 2003

Hosted by Antique Electronic Supply
March 8, 2003



Rare Tube Collection Found

By George H. Fathauer (tubes©qwest.net)

Around the end of November, 2003, I was contacted by a gentleman in New Jersey who stated that he had some old deForest handmade tubes that he wanted to sell and that he was sending me a CD rom with pictures of them. I found the pictures hard to interpret; however, I made him an offer anyway and I was awarded the sale.

Further study of the pictures and consultation with Jerry Vanicek, president of the Tube Collectors Association, revealed that the tubes actually represented a very rare collection, which included, among those having historical significance, a deForest spherical Audion.

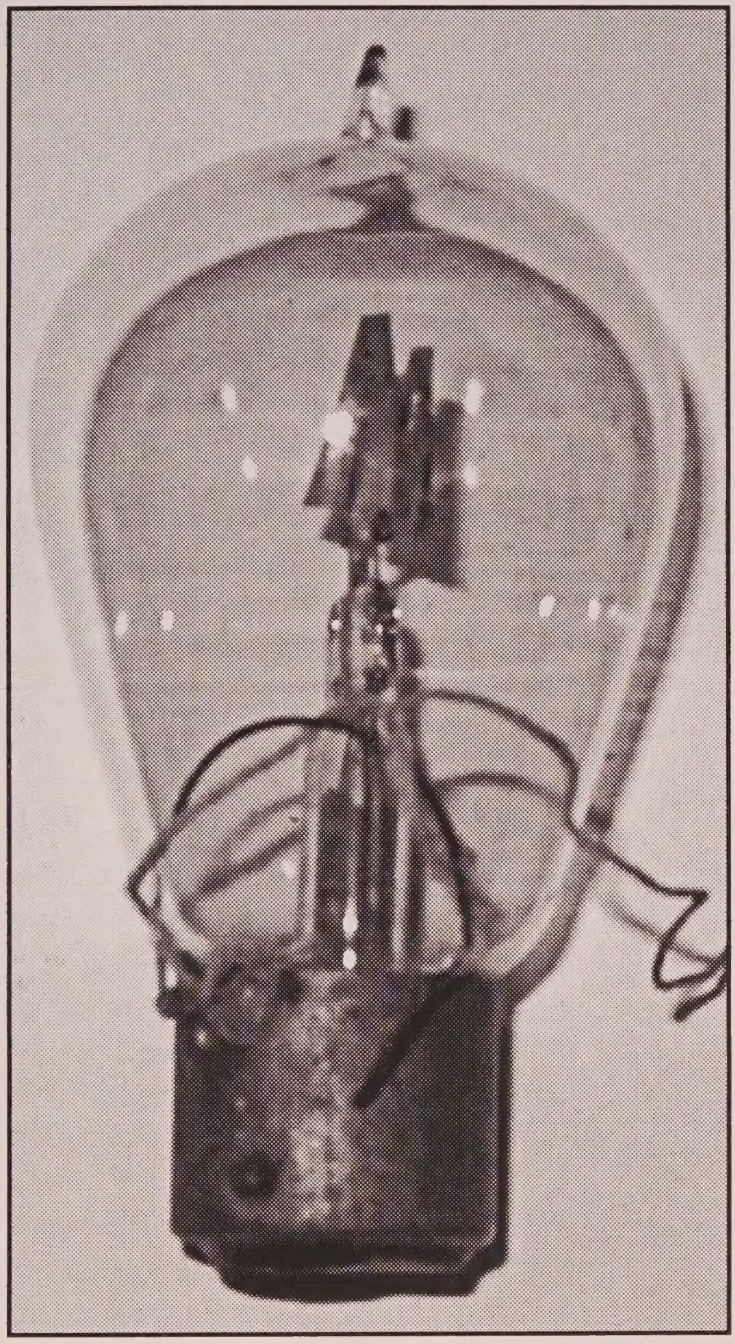
Three Fleming valves were among the more notable tubes. The Fleming valve was "believed to have been used by the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of America" (Tyne, 1977, pp. 47-48). One of them is shown in Figure 1. John Ambrose Fleming was technical adviser to Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Company Ltd of England where, in October 1904, he discovered that an electric lamp with an extra electrode could produce rectification.

A short time later deForest inserted a third electrode or grid in a similar device and produced the first tube whereby the electron stream could be controlled to produce amplification. The evolution thereof is legendary and well documented.

Other tubes in the collection included some American Marconi Type D, which were produced in 1915. They were constructed along the line of the deForest Audion. One is shown in Figure 2. A couple of them are also shown in Tyne (1977, p. 128). These tubes resulted in suits and counter-suits with deForest the dominant winner.

Another group of tubes of various configurations were Weagant valves that were attempts to get around deForest patents by using just a filament and an anode with external electrodes for control. Roy A. Weagant was chief engineer of American Marconi and directed this development. One of the Weagant valves in this collection is shown in Figure 3. Others are shown on page 183 (Tyne (1977). The collection also included one of the mounted Weagant valves, which is also shown at the bottom of page 183. Although some experimental amplifiers were built with these tubes (valves as they are called by the British), commercial production was never achieved.

An interesting tube development represented by the collection is shown in Figure 4. This was the addition of a



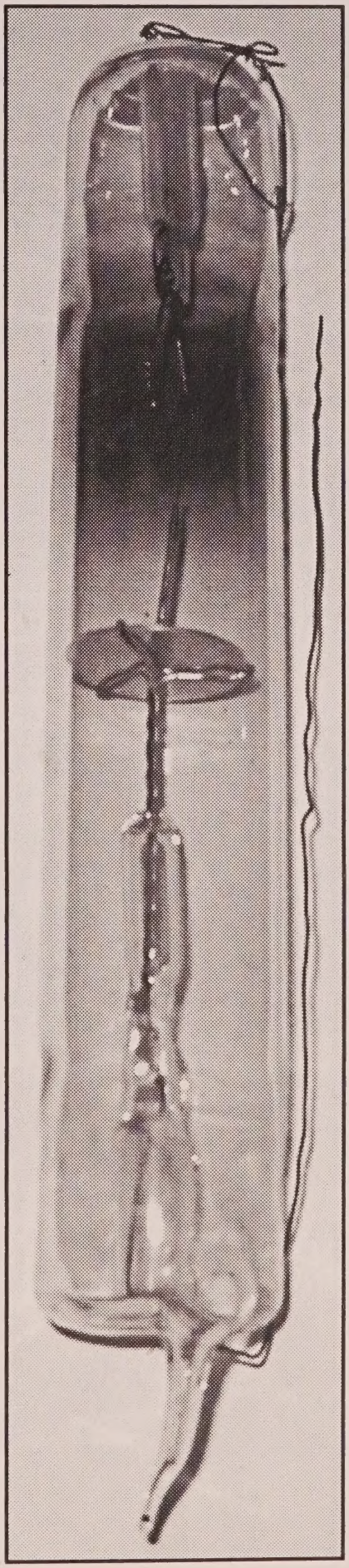


Fig. 1, Fleming Valve. Right: Fig. 2, American Marconi Type D

separate cathode, thus enabling isolation of the filament or heater. The tube type was named the UX-225. Since there were only 4 pin bases and sockets available at the time, the first production of these tubes used a bayonet lamp base mounted on top of the tube to provide filament connections. Subsequent development led to a experimental 5 pin base with the added pin central to the other 4 pins in what has been called a "W"

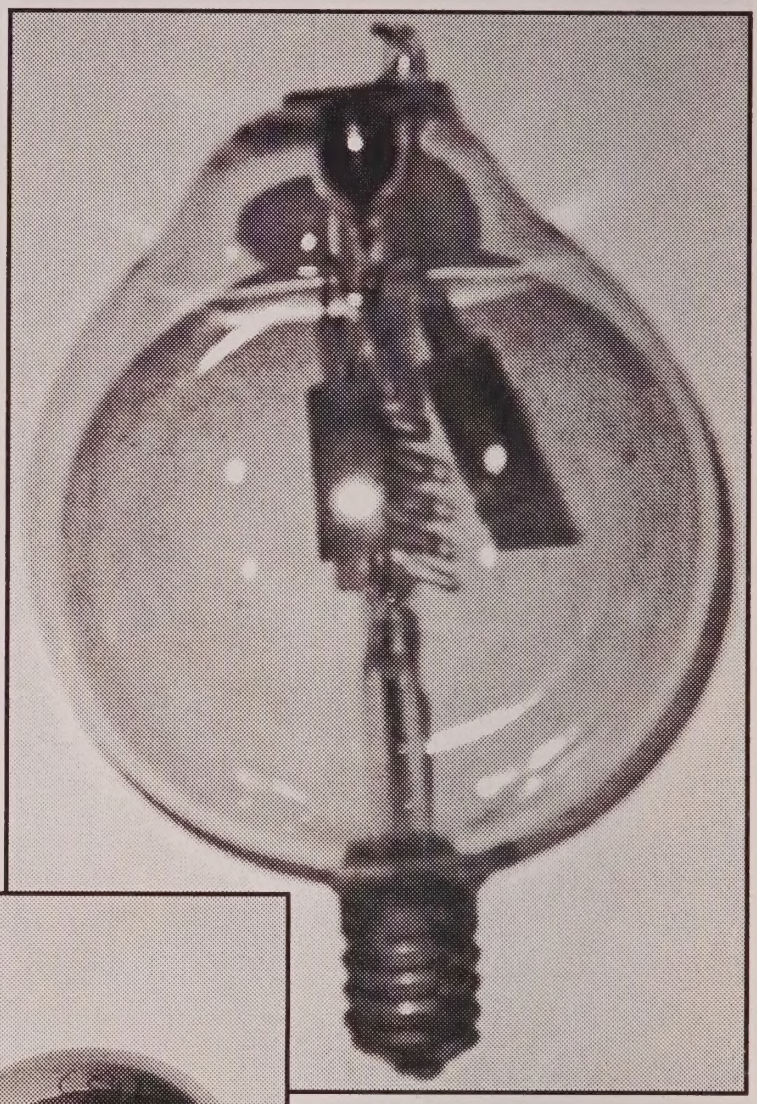


Fig. 3, Weagant Valve

Fig. 4, UX-225 with 4 and 5 pin bases

configuration. Both types of tube are shown in Figure 4.

The final development of the UX-225 included a 5 pin base with a circular pattern named the UY base. The very successful production version of this tube was the UY-227, which RCA announced in May of 1927. This and other developments to use AC operated heaters are discussed in Stokes (1982, p. 42-48). Millions of UY-227 tubes were made as were millions of other tubes using the UY-base. The later production of these tubes used the ST shape glass and are commonly known by the 2-digit designations of 27, 56, etc.

I have duplicate copies of the CD ROM that shows all of these tubes in this rare collection, and I will make them available to interested collectors.

REFERENCES

Stokes, J. W. (1982). *70 Years of Radio Tubes & Valves.* Sonoran Publishing, LLC.

Tyne, G. F. (1977). *Saga of the Vacuum Tube.* Indianapolis, Indiana: Howard W. Sams & Co.

Origins of the Collection?

In the June 2004 issue of *Tube Collector*, the publication of the Tube Collectors Association, Ludwell Sibley reported the following on the origins of the collection:

"The real magic was an exquisite collection of Fleming Valves, Marconi Type D triodes, and Weagant Valves. Many of them showed signs of laboratory use: bits of wire soldered to bases, open filaments, blackened spots on the glass, etc. Nevertheless, they reflect a great number of little known variants...

"The collection came with a tantalizing hint of its origins: a note written on the back of a water-stained, opened envelope. The pencilled notation was *'1928 - RCA / Van Courtlandt St / Pk South / Dr Goldsmith / in charge / Van Dyke - / engineer / Dr. Lee / Deforest / made tubes / said Dr. Van / Dyke.'* Now, the 1928 *IRE Year Book* reliably places Dr. Alfred N. Goldsmith, chief Broadcast Engineer, at RCA's Van Courtlandt Park laboratory in New York. Likewise with Arthur F. Van Dyke, Division Engineer. The tubes may have come from a lab cleanout at this location, RCA having been the successor to American Marconi. However, in light of the 'Marconi' nature of the rarer tubes, the attribution to Dr. deForest is well, troubled."

The June issue also has an article by Jerry Vanicek expanding on some of the more rare items in the collection.

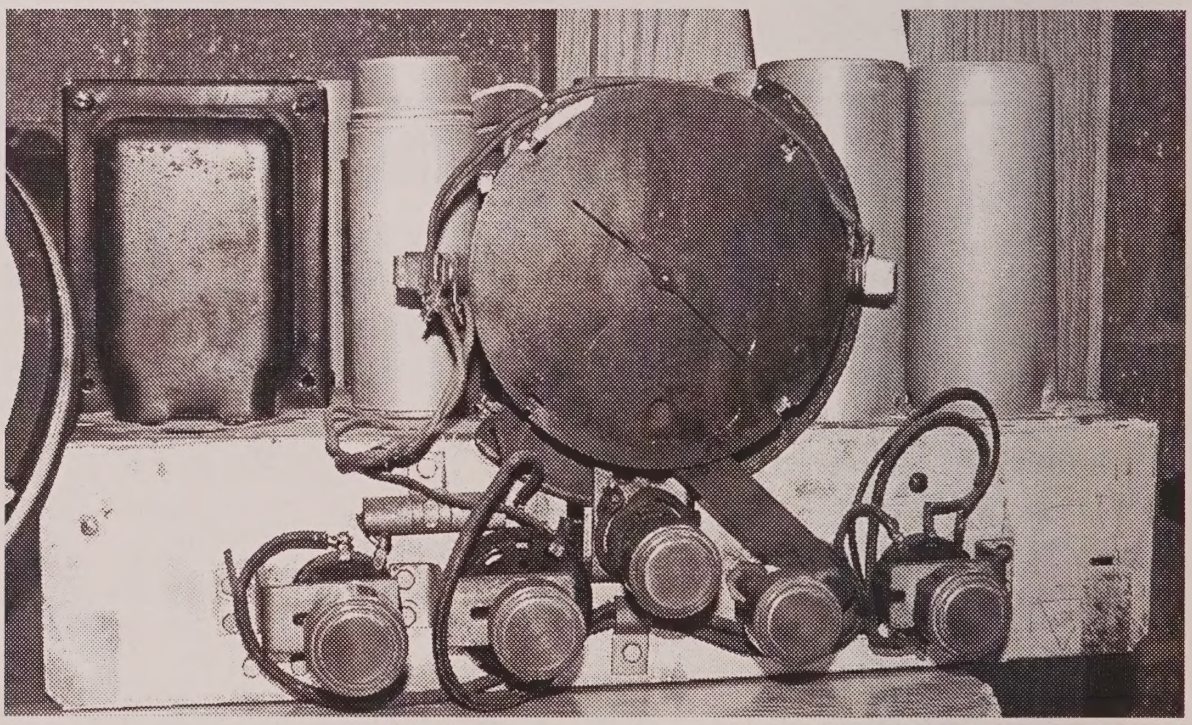
Tube Collector is a wonderful little publication devoted entirely to tubes and tube collecting. It features current prices, want ads, and informative, enthusiastic articles focused on the small kingdom of tubes. You can reach the Association at: PO Box 636, Ashland, OR 97520.

- Editor

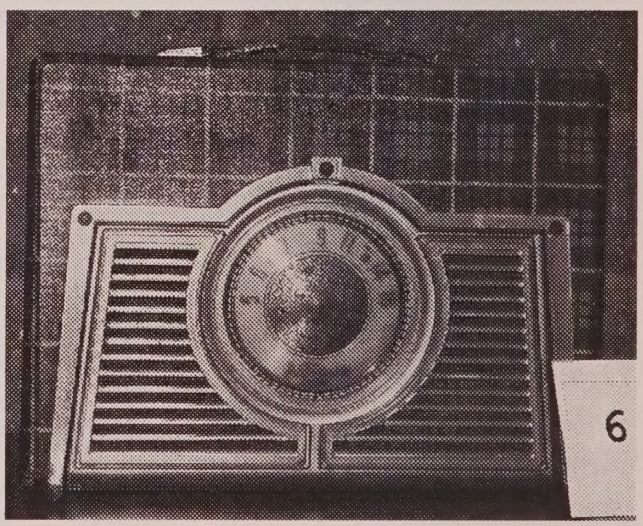
2003 radio roundup
april 19, 2003

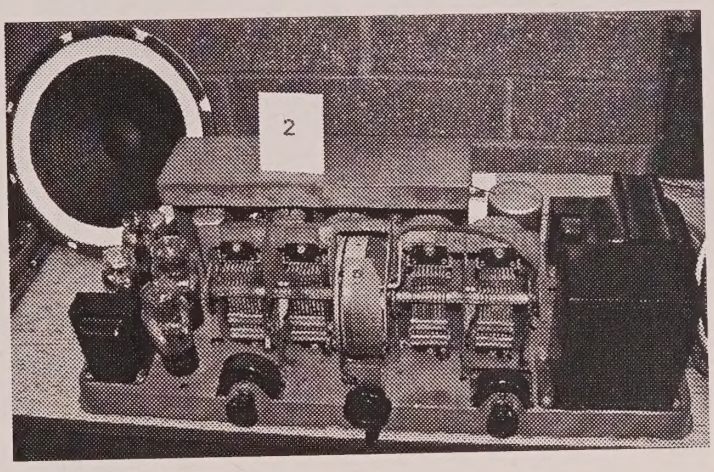
RADIO COLLECTING DISASTERS

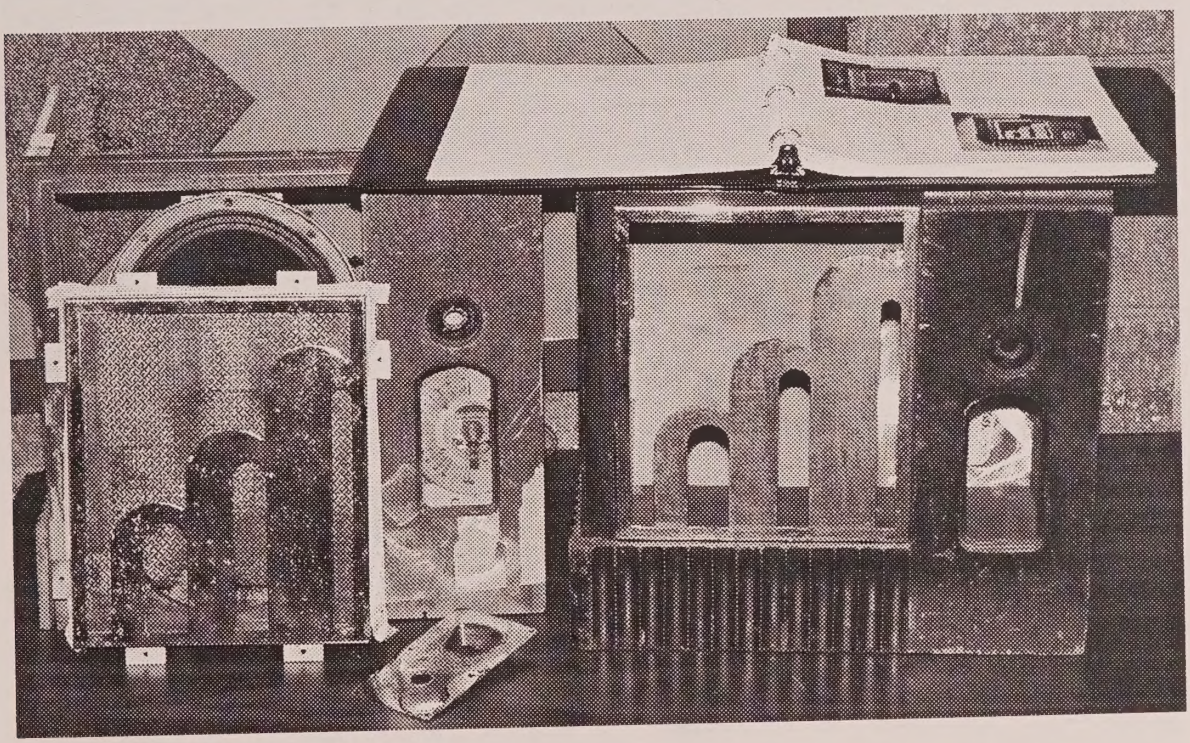
worst buys, ugly radios, misguided repairs, half-a-radio, etc



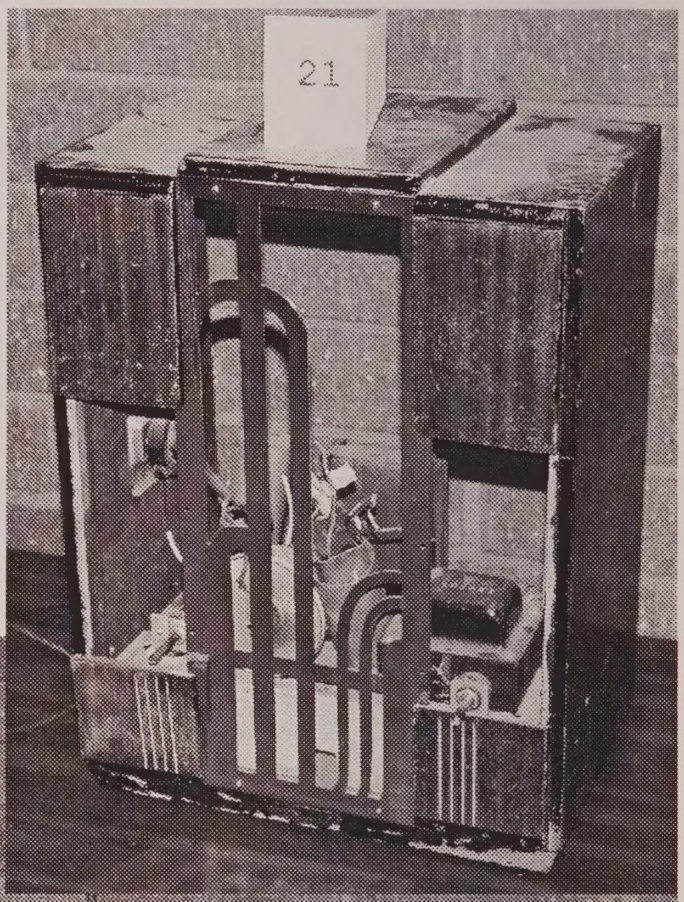
Why always celebrate the beautiful, the valuable, the rare? For the 2003 Radio Roundup our theme was the ugly, the worthless, the all-too common. Although every collector has such skeletons in the closet, only a few showed up at this event to air the dirty laundry. Those brave few told their stories, hoped for compassion, received a few laughs, and are relieved that they can now move on with their lives.



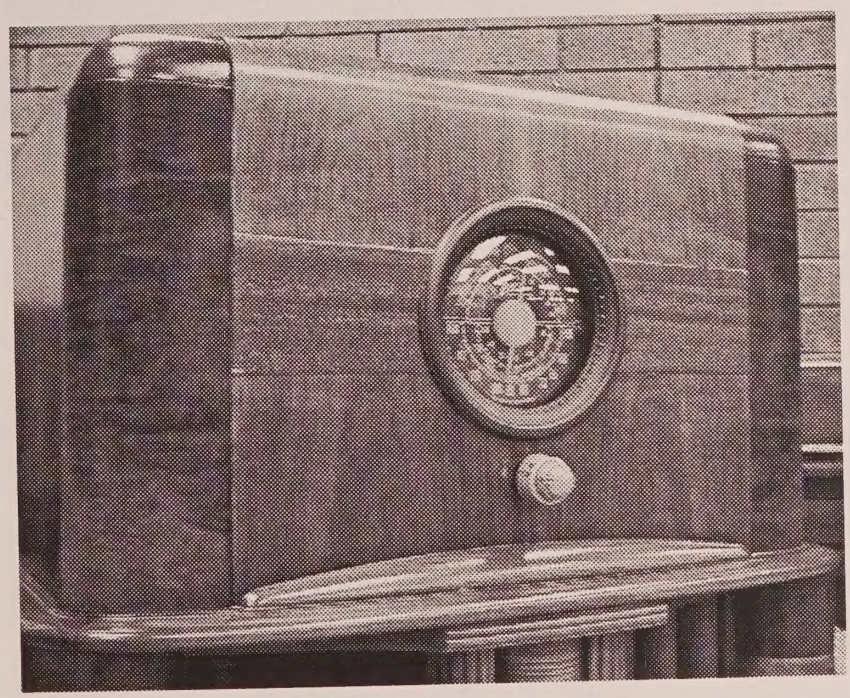




A few examples of a sad lot, including a plaid Automatic radio, a tape recorder that is 50-cycles only, a disreputable cathedral, Majestics that can't quite come together and various bits and pieces that represent radio collecting off-days, or just dumb bad luck.



Ken Krol can't lose. Ken is a frequent winner of many awards from AARC and other clubs for his cabinet restorations, but this time he wins for the opposite reasons. This sad Majestic radio won as the "Ugliest Radio" and also for having the "Worst Cabinet".



Bill Lettow's 1940 Zenith 11-S-474 console was the big winner, taking the "Most Majorly Flawed", "Worst Purchase" and, curiously, the "Prettiest Radio" awards. It's a nice radio marred by the work of a previous owner who cut away 4 rows of pushbuttons from either side of the dial, and then covered the gaping wounds with veneer, poorly applied. Con Morton laughs as Bill tries to explain away his good fortune.

What's happened to those great national swap meets?

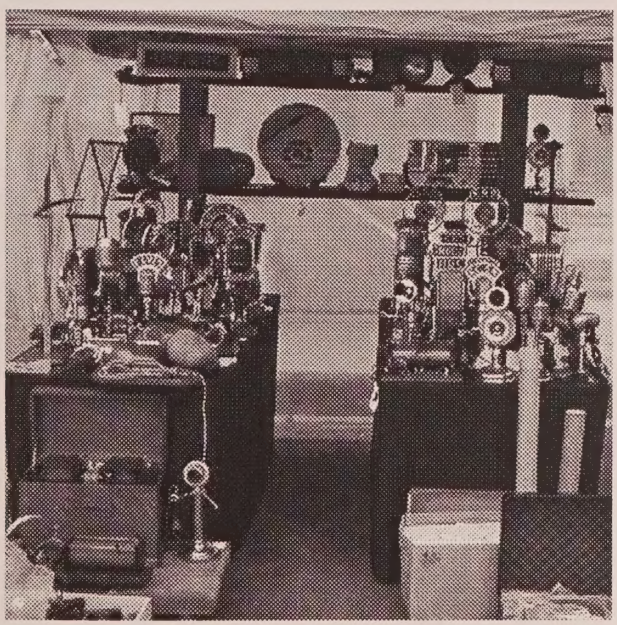
Report on the 2003 Swap Meets at Elgin and Rochester

Story and Photos by Martin Bergan

Traveling these days has become seriously more expensive, although not as bad as it was within Arizona this summer (2003). I am referring, of course, to the price of gasoline. Between the pipeline break in Arizona and the power blackout in the northeastern states, Arizona took a harder hit than any other states.

On this summer trip, I passed through twenty-two states, four of them twice each. The highest gasoline price I encountered was in Texas, of all places, at $1.769. I heard from friends at home during this time saying that prices here had surpassed two dollars with some station gouging at up to four.

I spent six weeks and four days on the road participating in the two radio meets and visiting friends and relatives, driving a total 7071 miles. The two meets, which I attended last in 2001, were, to say the least, somewhat disappointing, regardless of the glowing reports written by the officers of those clubs. Of course, good official reports are expected, but to an occasional attendee like myself, who has been to these shows almost every year



since 1990 in the case of Elgin, and four times during the last ten years to AWA, the differences are very apparent.

The locations of the meets have been the same each time I visited, so the relativity of meet size was pretty easy to gauge. At Elgin, the number of vendors this year was about one fourth of the early nineties meets. At AWA, about half. The same applies to the number of visitors whether buying or not. The Elgin meet is open to the general public but AWA is not. I think AWA is making a mistake in that respect. The whole idea of these clubs is to promote the history, collecting and restoration of radio, television and related industries. Keeping one of the biggest meets closed to the public defeats the purpose. Many of the major dealers of antique radios did not attend either meet this year. In contacting several after getting home, they said that the amount of business at the meets no longer was worth making the trip based on the last couple

years of activity. I could certainly see their point of view. There were very few high-end buyers there, and they expressed disappointment in the products available.

The organization of both meets, was as always, excellent and professional. The auctions were lively and interesting but not with much in items of real value, financially or historically. I personally only acquired two radios; one privately at Elgin and one in the auction at Rochester. A few purchases of parts in the swap meets rounded out my total acquisitions.

What could be the reasons for the obvious decline in antique radio meets? I believe there are several. For one, the general economy for the past few years has most everybody tightening their belts. Hobbies are always the first to suffer in such circumstances along with charities. The higher costs of travel also contribute.

Another is the gradual decrease in sources of material. We have nearly exhausted the places of "great finds" in attics, basements and barns across the country. There are so many people searching for items of value to either collect or sell that the well is close to running dry.

Probably the biggest impact has been caused by the Internet auction companies, primarily eBay. Thousands of radios have changed hands through eBay. Many dealers now have their own web sites offering radios and TVs for sale. Some make it possible for individu-

als to sell their items for a fee. It's all legitimate competition, but I believe it takes away an important part of the hobby; that being the personal contact among the people pursuing the same hobbies and goals and being able to hands-on examine the item of interest. Even at the auctions there is a preview time of some hours during which one can examine everything to be auctioned. The long distance dealing through the Internet has encouraged a lot of cheating and fraud to which I have been victimized a couple of times. This is easy to avoid in dealing face to face with someone with the item right there to see. That's what the swap meets and live auctions provide.

Lastly and most sadly, is the passing of the older folks who have lead the clubs and provided so much heritage information and guidance. We can only rely on books and articles to learn of their work and leadership. The young generation today seems to have little interest in history of any kind and very few seek such information or begin collecting in a chosen field. The recent decision to decrease the number of publications per year of AARC's bulletin is a sure sign of this decrease in interest. We are not alone. Many clubs complain of the same problem. It appears that by the end of the twenty-first century, antique radios and such vintage items will only appear in museums, most having disappeared altogether unless we do something about it now.

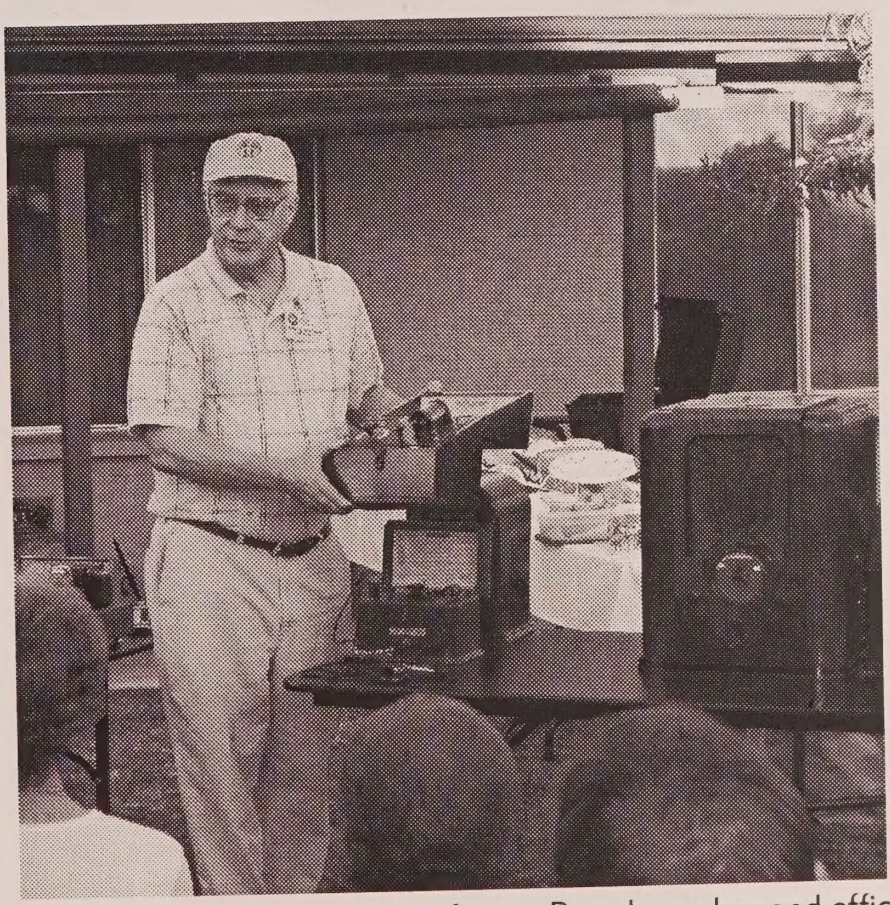
October Meeting

Carl Roberts, AARC Board member, former officer

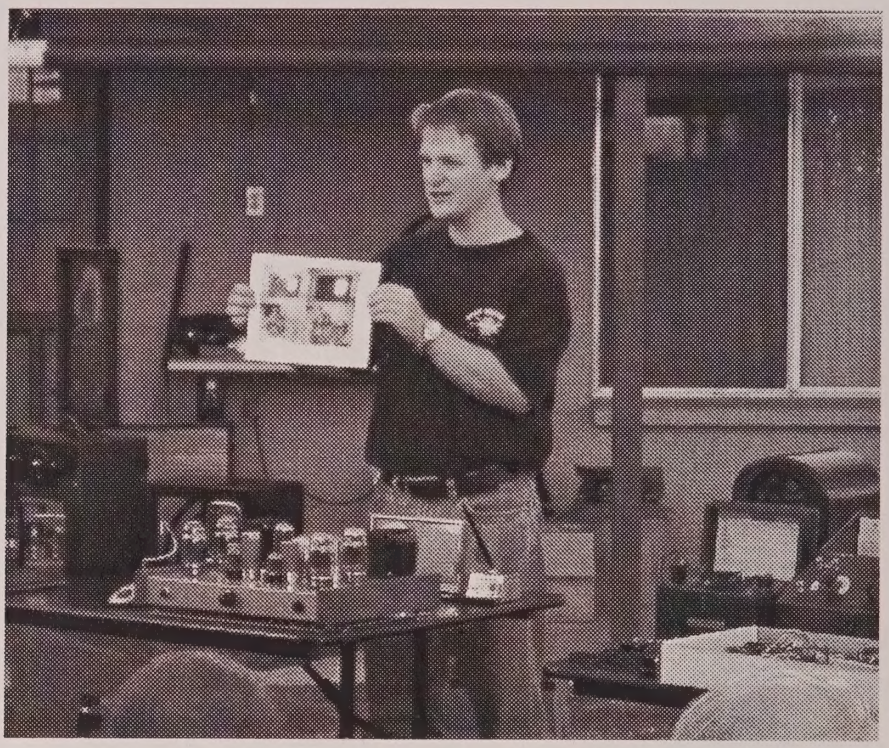
Pot-Luck Picnic • Show-and-Tell • Annual Business Meeting
October 4, 2003 • Hosted by Dennis Craft

Stephen Lew - current AARC Board Member

Bob Ludwick



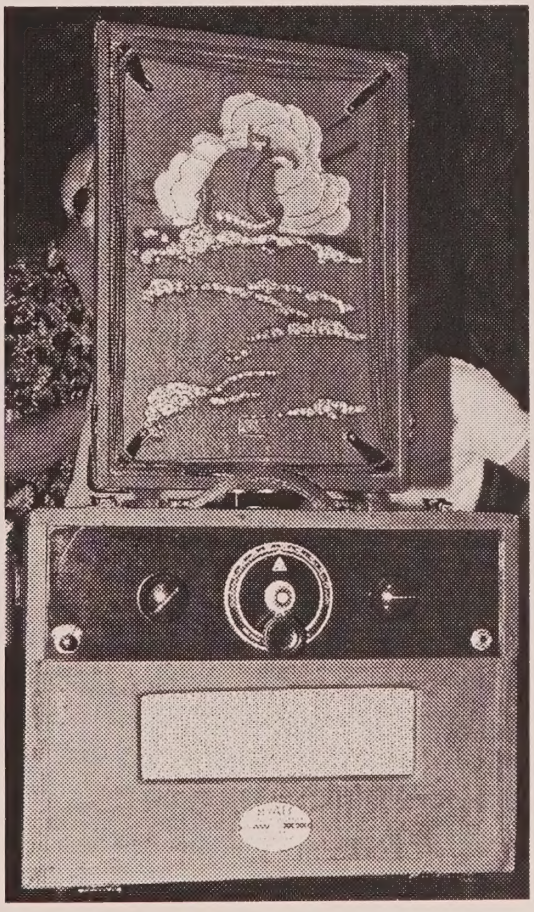
Larry Kenan - founding member, former Board member and officer



Mike Brown - current AARC Treasurer

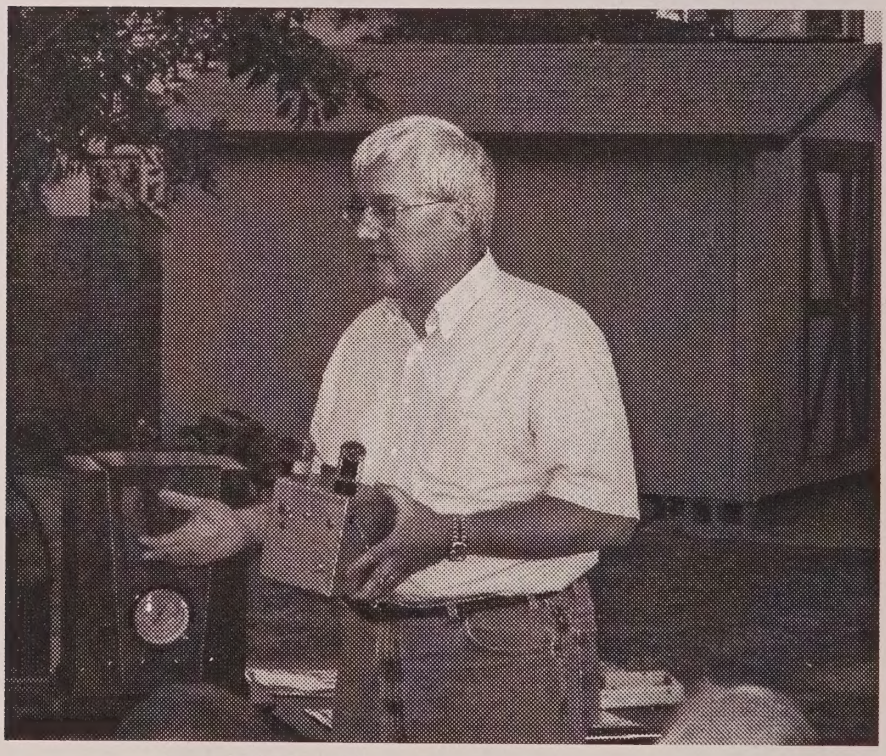
Les Rayner, founding member, former officer

Gorgeous California radio from the collection of Mark Toppo



An unusual Hyatt Radio

Mark Toppo and current President Steve Smith



Jeff Shields, current Webmaster

Carol Lambert and former president Dave Lambert

John Martin, current Secretary

Also in November 2003, Dennis Craft, Martin Bergan and other club members presented a display of Motorola radios, TVs and related items for Motorola employees at the company's anniversary celebration.

For Sale: EICO oscilloscope, Model 425. Looks good; quite possibly works. CRT fine. Has all 19 knobs and 3 toggle switches. Best Offer. Andy Ooms, Pine. Phone: 928-476-2164. Email: oomspine@cybertrails.com

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